PRINCE BISMARCK

CHARLES LOWE, M.A.

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PRINCE BISMARCK

AN

Historical Biography

BY

CHARLES LOWE, M.A.

With Two Portraits.

INTRODUCTION BY

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VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is given to many a man, of whom history takes no note, to advance in some degree the greatness and prosperity of his country. It is given to a few men in each century so to guide the forward movement of their people, that the progress made seems mainly due to their initiative, and becomes indissolubly linked with their names. Among these few there is sometimes one who has the chance to deal with a question vital to his land and ready for solution, and who brings the intelligence and energy necessary to solve it; who leads his nation through a crisis in its destiny to the goal of centuries of desire and effort; whose achievements make all that has been done before seem tentative and preparatory—a series of episodes to which his success gives dramatic roundness and conclusion. This has been the happy fortune of Prince Bismarck. He is the unifier of Germany; and, in the light of this result, the complicated and often perplexing course of German history seems after all to have a distinct central motive; *viz.*, the struggle for a satisfactory national organization—for unity.

All the German tribes were brought beneath one sceptre, that of Charles the Great, at the beginning of the ninth century. But the Frankish conquests did not create a German nation, for the various German tribes were only parts of a universal European empire. With the final division of this empire in 887, it seemed that the basis was laid for a great German state. King Arnulf ruled Germans only, and ruled nearly all the purely German

territories of the Carolingian empire. But the German kings had inherited from their imperial predecessors the thirst for imperial power. Arnulf himself was crowned emperor at Rome, and under his Saxon successors in the tenth century, the union of the royal and imperial titles became permanent. From this time the emperors so squandered their material resources and their energy in the effort to rule Italy, that they ceased at last to be truly kings in Germany. The officials of the crown made their offices heritable property; they became princes, and the power of the emperor in their territories lessened from reign to reign. The great prelates, likewise, freed their territories more and more from the imperial control: and finally the cities obtained a municipal independence that was almost municipal sovereignty.

In the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Hapsburgs, in whose house the imperial dignity had become almost hereditary, made a last great effort to re-establish their power over Germany; and the result was the decisive triumph of local sovereignty and disunity. Germany had become mainly protestant; the house of Hapsburg had remained catholic. The aim of the Hapsburgs was to re-establish the imperial rule in the widest sense; to subject Germany to one law and one faith. In saving its religious liberty, Germany lost its chance of political unity, and condemned itself to division and weakness at the very moment at which its neighbors were becoming strong. In the thirty years' war, Germany became the battle-ground, not of the warring faiths only, but of the conflicting dynastic ambitions of Europe; and during the two following centuries every great European question was fought out upon German soil. "In the merciless justice of history," says von Treitschke, "the nation that had lusted to rule Europe was cast under the feet of the stranger."

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the "Holy

Roman Empire" was the jest of Europe. Its rulers had preserved the pomp but parted with all the substance of power. The "most invincible" emperor had neither money nor men for the defense of his realm. That Germany lost its boundaries to the west and north was only natural; that it did not share the fate of Poland was due chiefly to Prussia. Out of the wreck of the empire there had sprung up, among a multitude of petty principalities, two strong states—Austria and Prussia. Austria was the older and the stronger; but after the failure of its attempt to impose upon Germany its rule and its religion, Austria turned its back upon the fatherland and devoted itself to schemes of extension eastward. Upon Prussia fell the brunt of the defence of Germany. A singular series of chances had given to the Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg outlying territories extending to the Niemen on the east and to the Rhine on the west; and in defending their own possessions they were obliged to protect the empire. Brandenburg-Prussia throve under the task, and grew strong in doing its duty: so strong that in the eighteenth century, under the great Frederick, it was able to make head, not against Austria only, but against half of Europe.

At the outbreak of the revolutionary wars, at the close of the last century, Germany was in name an empire, in reality a "trias,"—Austria, Prussia, and a great number of petty principalities. The empire included eighty-six ecclesiastical territories (archbishoprics, bishoprics and abbacies), and two hundred and thirty-eight secular territories (ruled by dukes, margraves, landgraves, princes and counts), besides fifty-one free cities and one thousand four hundred and seventy-five knight-fees, whose possessors were "immediate," *i. e.*, owed allegiance to no one but the emperor.

In the course of the revolutionary wars the number of imperial estates was greatly reduced. By the peace of Luneville,

in 1801, all the left bank of the Rhine was ceded to France. Ninety-seven principalities and free cities, and a great number of knight-fees, were transformed into four new French departments. The treaty of peace declared that all the secular princes who had lost territory by this cession were to be indemnified by the empire. This was done at Ratisbon in 1803. The indemnifying material was obtained by "mediatizing" all the free cities but six, and suppressing all the spiritual estates but three. In 1806 Napoleon formed the Confederation of the Rhine, and again enriched the larger principalities at the expense of the smaller. The Rhine Confederation came, in 1810, to include all that was left of Germany—*i. e.*, all that was not under the direct rule of foreign sovereigns—except Austria and Prussia, and much of what had previously been Austrian or Prussian territory. In the formation and development of this confederation Napoleon suppressed two more free cities, seventy-two secular principalities, the three remaining spiritual estates, and all the existing knight-fees.

When the allies overthrew Napoleon for the second and last time at Waterloo, and reduced France by the second peace of Paris to its former (pre-revolutionary) boundaries, the congress of Vienna undertook the re-organization of Germany. None of the small estates suppressed by Napoleon were re-established, for the simple reason that the larger states which had received the spoil refused absolutely to give it up. Not even in the lands regained from France was the old order restored. These lands were needed to indemnify Prussia and other states for damages suffered at the hands of Napoleon, and costs incurred in overthrowing him. The map of Germany was thus greatly simplified. Of nearly two thousand "immediate estates" in existence in 1793, there were left in 1815 but thirty-nine; *viz.*, the Austrian empire and five kingdoms (Prussia, Bavaria, Württemberg, Hannover and Saxony), twenty-nine

grand duchies, duchies and principalities, and four free cities (Hamburg, Lübeck, Bremen and Frankfurt).

The "Holy Roman Empire" had ceased to exist in 1806. It was not resuscitated. The thirty-nine* states and cities were grouped together into a loose confederation. The only central organ of this confederation was a federal diet, representing the states, not the people, of Germany. Its members were nominated by the governments of the single states, and voted as their governments instructed. The composition of the diet and the distribution of votes differed according to the nature of the business to be transacted. In the full diet—"plenum"—each state had at least one vote; the larger states had each two or three votes, Austria and Prussia each four. The full diet alone could make organic modifications in the federal law, admit new members to the confederation, declare war and make peace. It met seldom; in the later history of the confederation, never. The ordinary business of the confederation was transacted by a "narrower council" in which eleven of the larger states had each one vote, while the other states and the free cities were grouped into six "curiæ", each curia casting one vote. It was in this narrower council of the federal diet that Otto von Bismarck passed his political *Lehrjahre* (1850–59) as representative of the Prussian government. The powers of the federal government—if it could be called a government—were exceedingly limited. All real power resided in the governments of the single states.

This solution—or rather this failure to reach a solution—of the national question filled the German people with chagrin. When all Germany rose in 1813 to drive the foreigner from the soil of the fatherland, the princes had promised the reorganization of Germany on a national basis. The people thought, and rightly,

* Diminished before 1866 to thirty-three, by the extinction of several petty dynasties and the abdication of others.

that the promise had not been kept. But how could it have been kept? National unity is unthinkable without a centre of supreme power; and Germany had emerged from the Napoleonic wars as it had entered them, a "trias"—two great powers jealously confronting each other, and a complex of little states unwilling to subject themselves to either. If either of the two great powers would have submitted to the domination of the other, the little states would have been powerless to resist the dominant state; but such a voluntary submission was not to be expected from either Austria or Prussia. Which of these two was to rule Germany was a question not to be decided by the wisdom of any number of diplomats, but solely by the arbitrament of battle.

But whenever that question should come to decision, the union of Germany under the sceptre of the victor was sure to follow at once. The south-western kingdoms and duchies of the confederation, in spite of their greatly increased area and population, were much weaker than the little estates which constituted the third member of the "trias" in the old empire. The estates of the old empire rested on a legal basis. Any defect in their title to existence had been healed by a prescription of centuries. The new "sovereignties" of the confederation rested on no basis except spoliation. The kings of Bavaria and Württemberg were kings, as the people mockingly described them, "by the grace of Napoleon." So much at least had been gained through the revolution. It had destroyed the old legalities, and had left nothing with any moral basis for existence in their stead.

The establishment of national unity was not the only desire which possessed the minds of the Germans in 1813–15, and the failure of the princes to keep their word in this matter was not the only ground of popular disaffection in the following decades. The first and most abiding result of the French revolution in

the minds of the German people was the desire for representation in the government of the single states—for constitutionalism. Here again assurances had been given by the princes during the struggle with Napoleon which the greater part failed to make good. From 1815 these two ideas, national unity and representative government, became indissolubly connected in the popular mind; and in the plans of the popular leaders, so far as they can be said to have had plans, liberty was always the means by which unity was to be attained. The chief obstacle to unity, they argued, was the selfish dynastic interest of the princes; let the people once grasp the reins of government, and there would be nothing to prevent the national organization of Germany.

The revolution of 1848 gave the Germans an unexpected opportunity to test this programme. In Vienna, in Berlin, in the capitals of all the German states where constitutional government had not yet been established, the people rose and compelled their princes to give or promise them representative institutions. The princes were also constrained to issue writs for the election of deputies to a national parliament; and when this parliament met at Frankfurt and established a provisional government, the federal diet surrendered its authority to the new government and disbanded.

The movement came to nothing. It was badly managed; but if it had been better managed it would still have come to nothing. The substitution of one national sovereignty for two score state-sovereignties could not be accomplished by debates and votes. But the assembled popular wisdom of Germany did not even approach the cardinal question—whether Austria or Prussia should be made the centre of the new Germany—until it was too late to accomplish anything. Months of valuable time were wasted in discussing "fundamental rights," and it was not until the end of March, 1849, that the parliament decided to offer the imperial crown to Frederick William IV. of Prussia. A

delegation was sent to Berlin to make the offer. The king called their attention to the fact that they were offering him something which was not theirs to bestow. He reminded them that there were princes in Germany, and that he could not exercise imperial authority over those princes without their consent. He therefore refused to assume the imperial title. This refusal was due, in part, to reasons other than those which he gave the delegation. He shrank from the revolutionary taint which hung about the proffered crown. He thought the Frankfurt constitution too democratic. But the reasons which he gave were sufficient. The petty princes had recovered from the stupor of alarm into which the revolution of the preceding year had plunged them, and were not likely to submit themselves voluntarily to a Hohenzollern master. The offer of the imperial crown was therefore simply an invitation to the King of Prussia to mobilize his army and take it. But this meant war with Austria; for Austria had already beaten down the revolution in Vienna and in Italy, secured the aid of Russia against the insurgent Hungarians, and would soon have its hands free for action in Germany.

After refusing the offer of the Frankfurt parliament, the King of Prussia endeavored, by negotiation with the North-German princes, to establish a union of the North-German states under the hegemony of Prussia. But these efforts were thwarted by the opposition of Austria. For a moment, at Olmütz, it seemed likely that the two states would come to a decision of their relative strength—and of the German question—by war. But Russia stood behind Austria, and Prussia gave way. The proposed union of North Germany was abandoned, and the old federal diet reassembled at Frankfurt.

It was during these troubled times that the man who was not merely to offer but to give the imperial crown to a king of Prussia first drew upon himself the attention of the public.

Herr von Bismarck was a member of the Prussian diet in 1848, and distinguished himself by the energy and audacity with which he maintained the cause of royal absolutism. In 1849 he warmly defended the course of the king in refusing the imperial title, basing his defence on the democratic character of the Frankfurt constitution. He compared the pact which the king, by accepting such a constitution, would make with the democracy to the pact between the hunter and the devil, in the *Freischütz:* sooner or later, he said, the people would come to the emperor, and, pointing to the imperial arms, would say, "Do you fancy this eagle was given you for nothing?"

It is not singular that the attitude of Bismarck attracted the attention and secured the confidence of the king. In 1851 he was sent to Frankfurt, and shortly afterwards appointed representative of Prussia in the re-established federal diet. There he remained for eight years, convincing himself more and more fully of the absurdity of the federal organization, of the necessity of a national union under Prussian leadership, and of the impossibility of attaining this end without war with Austria. In reading Bismarck's reports during these eight years, one is struck with the constant iteration of warnings against Austrian aggressions, denunciations of Austrian intrigues, and demonstrations of the necessary antagonism between Austrian and Prussian interests. The dominant clique at Berlin was friendly to Austria; the king himself was well disposed to Austria; and Bismarck was trying to educate king and court into hostility to Austria.

In the year 1858, Frederick William IV. became insane and his brother, the crown prince, assumed the regency. In 1859, Bismarck was sent as Prussian ambassador to St. Petersburg. In 1861, Frederick William IV. died, and the prince regent became king. In William I. Prussia obtained, for the first time since the death of Frederick the Great, a really capable ruler;

one worthy to be named with the Great Elector and Frederick William I. King William—now Emperor William—is not possessed of genius, unless an unusual amount of common sense is genius. He is an able organizer of armies and an exceptionally good judge of men. His most valuable trait has been a fixedness of resolve, which often approaches obstinacy. Having once decided that a person is worthy of his confidence, or that a particular line of policy is expedient, no amount of opposition will make him withdraw his confidence from his man or alter his measures. This trait in King William's character has often been sorely trying to his brilliant and imperious minister. Bismarck has more than once found it necessary so to shape events that their inexorable logic should supplement his arguments, and compel the king where it was impossible to persuade him. But without this trait in the character of his master the career of the minister would have been impossible. Only a very obstinate king would have kept Bismarck at the head of his government during the three years (1863–66) before Königgrätz.

Bismarck utilized his three years in St. Petersburg (1859–62) in cementing the friendly relations already existing between Russia and Prussia. His aim of course was to secure Russia's neutrality in the event of war between Prussia and Austria. In 1862 he was recalled to Berlin, and offered the minister-presidency of Prussia. He was disinclined to accept it; at least, before he had satisfied himself that his plans against Austria would not be opposed by France. To France he went, accordingly, as ambassador of the Prussian king, and remained there through the summer.

When, in the autumn, he was peremptorily summoned to Berlin, he was satisfied that Napoleon could be managed. He had read his man to the bottom; knew precisely what proportions of idealism and of craft entered into his mental make-up; and (perhaps not the least important result of his mission) he

had left in Napoleon's mind the conviction that the new minister-president of Prussia was a madman who, with a little encouragement, would bring Prussia to the verge of ruin and open golden opportunities to the cool and far-sighted emperor of the French. Eight years later Napoleon was a prisoner in Germany, and King William was marching on Paris with a united Germany at his back.

It does not fall within the plan of this introduction to trace even in outline the history of those wonderful eight years. How the Schleswig-Holstein question was solved by the Danish war, the German question by the wars with Austria and France, and with what marvellous skill and foresight Bismarck contrived to gain, at the close of each struggle, ground of diplomatic vantage for the coming contest—all this has been often described, but never more clearly than by Mr. Lowe.

The first volume of the present work brings the history of Bismarck's life down to the close of the Franco-German war. The second covers the period from 1871 to 1885. In this second volume the English reader has offered him, for the first time, a connected sketch of Bismarck's foreign and internal policy since the establishment of the German empire. In this decade and a half fall events of the greatest importance. The stability of the new empire has been assured by diplomacy no less skillful than that employed in its erection. Austria has been converted from a sullen foe into a steadfast friend. Italy has been brought into alliance with Austria and Germany—an alliance whose declared object is the maintenance of the European peace. Germany has developed into a naval power of the first rank, and has taken the first steps toward the establishment of commercial colonies. Within, the empire has been and is still agitated by two great conflicts: the old struggle with the Roman catholic church, and the new struggle with social democracy. In all the

questions of this period, German and European, the imperial chancellor is always an important and often a determinant factor; and his biography necessarily becomes a history not of Germany alone, but of continental Europe.

MUNROE SMITH.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE, N. Y.,
December 25th, 1885.

PREFACE.

THIS is the first attempt, by an English writer, to place before his countrymen a complete historical sketch of the career of the great German statesman who will occupy such a conspicuous place in the annals of the Nineteenth Century. British and American readers have from time to time been supplied with various translations from the German, dealing with isolated sections and phases of the work and character of Prince Bismarck; but they have hitherto been without a connected and elaborate account of his whole career from a purely English point of view, and these volumes are intended to supply this much-felt want. Aiming, as they do, at recording in as complete a manner as possible the personal achievements of the greatest man of the age, they at the same time claim to be regarded as a Political History of Modern Germany—in so far as that History can be written without materials which the future alone can disclose.

It is hoped that not the least useful portion of

this work will be found to be translations of the Prussian and Imperial Constitutions, which we have included in the Appendix of Treaties that mark the several stages of development in the national unity of Germany. If Englishmen would but turn to these documents when any constitutional controversy is agitating the Parliaments of Berlin, they would at once perceive on which side lay the balance of right and wrong.

The portrait of the Chancellor, which forms the frontispiece to the first volume, is from a photograph taken on the eve of his seventieth birthday; and it is generally admitted that no more characteristic likeness of the Prince has ever been produced by a similar process of art.

The author of this work will feel that his labour has been richly rewarded should it enable his countrymen to acquire a clearer understanding of that great and noble Teutonic nation, whose political unification has stamped the Nineteenth Century with its specific historical character; and whose origin, aspirations, and interests alike fit it to be the friend and ally of the English people as the vanguard in the march of civilisation.

C. L.

Berlin, 1885.

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PRINCE BISMARCK.

CHAPTER I.

YOUTH AND EARLY MANHOOD.

From Cologne to Berlin, by way of Hanover, the last stoppage but one made by the express traveller is at Stendal, the capital of the Old Mark, a walled and moated city which once belonged to the Hansa League, and was the residence of the Margraves of Brandenburg. A statue in one of the squares in Stendal reminds the visitor that Winckelmann, the "eloquent expounder of ancient art," first drew breath in this quaint old city, but the ancestors of a greater than Winckelmann once also trod its ancient streets. A few minutes after leaving Stendal on the left, the engine will "slow" before crossing the iron bridge that spans the winding Elbe; and if then the traveller keeps a look-out on the other side of the stream before the train has long recovered its normal speed, he will notice on the right, at less than a mile from the line, a compact little townlet with red-tiled roofs clustering around a square, brick-built, and daw-frequented church-belfry. The country all round is

Stendal.

comparatively woodless, flat, and liable to inundation, with here and there a windmill; and away to the south-west over the bare meadow-land, on the further bank of the Elbe, rise the ancient towers of Tangermünde, where the powerful Charles IV. once held his Imperial court.

Social standing of the Bismarcks.

Now this village, like most others in North Germany, is nothing in the main but a conglomeration of small, self-owned farms, or peasant-proprietorships (*Bauergüter*). All these little farmsteads look monotonously alike, but cheek by jowl with the village church there stands a more pretentious mansion, which might very well pass for the parsonage save for the barn-yard litter all around, the rows of unyoked wains, surly mastiffs, cackling poultry, and well-scoured milk-pails put out to drip. A large, wall-enclosed orchard, boasting a pond and a few classical statues, surrounds this mansion, which we immediately perceive to be the homestead, not of a *Bauergut*, or peasant-holding, but of a *Rittergut*, or knight's fee; and we further conclude at a glance that its owner, despite names, must be less of a country gentleman than a gentleman-farmer; a man, in fact, of about precisely the same social standing as Oliver Cromwell when he went to St. Ives to drain the fens and pasture cattle.

This, then, is the village of Schönhausen (Fairhouse) in the arrondissement of Jerichow, Department of Magdeburg, and Province of Prussian Saxony; and it was in this mansion that Otto Edward Leopold von

Bismarck, the Unifier of Germany, was born on the 1st of April, 1815. The Emperor William was then a delicate stripling of eighteen who, not long returned in triumph to Berlin from capitulated Paris, was busy conning his catechism for confirmation; while in the Tuileries Napoleon, escaped from Elba, and again surrounded by his adoring generals, was exerting himself like a giant to organise a force capable of crushing United Europe. Little, certainly, did the Satanic Corsican then think that far away in an obscure northern hamlet a man-child had on that 1st of April been born, endowed with the power of building up again what he had cast down, and of shivering his upstart dynasty to atoms. Before, however, proceeding to trace the career of this gifted man, let us devote a few words to his ancestors, who, if there be any truth in the principle of heredity, must also have been remarkable men.

Schönhausen; birthtime of Bismarck.

The estate of Schönhausen, on which he was born, had been for several generations in the possession of his forefathers, who belonged to one of the oldest and loyalest families in the Old Mark of Brandenburg, the centre and seed-germ of the present kingdom of Prussia. There has been much philological controversy as to the origin of the name Bismarck, which is now common enough among the Prussian gentry, occurring as it does in the Army List alone twenty-four times; but there can be little doubt that it is derived from the old fortress-tower and townlet of Bismark (thus spelt), which still stands not far

Origin of the name Bismarck.

from Stendal, in the very centre almost of the Old Mark. On the other hand, this fortalice of Bismark was plainly so called from the fact of its being the stronghold of the Mark, or March, on the Biese, a stream constituting the strategic line of defence in those parts; so that the territorial origin of Bismarck's name, like that of his great compatriot, Freiherr vom Stein, can admit of little doubt.

But, whatever the origin of their name, and whether of purely German or Slavonic extraction, we will not seek to climb the genealogical tree of the Bismarcks higher than their first recorded appearance in history about the beginning of the 14th century, when we read of some of them as warrior-knights engaged in driving back the invading Wends, or Vandals, towards the Oder, and of others following civic occupations at Stendal, and negotiating with princely courts for their Hansa city. In particular, one Rule, Rulo, or Rudolph Bismarck, is mentioned in the municipal records between 1309 and 1338 as a respected member of the guild of tailors, and as already manifesting the peculiar qualities of his race by carrying on a kind of "Kulturkampf" against the local Church powers of despotism and darkness. His son and successor, too, Claus or Nicolaus, while heading the patrician against the democratic element of the place, is also said to have foreshadowed the constructive genius of his great descendant by assisting the Bavarian Margrave to unite the various Marks of Brandenburg under one government.

The Bismarcks in the 14th century.

It would be sheer waste of time to follow the biographers in their attempts to determine whether the merchant Bismarcks of Stendal were noble or not; suffice it to say that the aforesaid Claus Bismarck was, for distinguished services in 1345, made custodian of Burgstall, a forest-surrounded feudal keep on the banks of the Tanger; that he died as Nicolaus de Bismarck Miles; and that his descendants, many of them renowned in their various peaceful and warlike occupations, continued to hold the knight's fee thus granted them for more than two centuries, when loyal unwillingness to offend an Elector who coveted their splendid hunting-grounds induced the family to exchange their property for other lands of far less value, the younger branch taking Schönhausen. The extensive forest of Letzlingen, near Magdeburg, is now the finest demesne of the Crown of Prussia; and when the Chancellor is invited by the Emperor William to slaughter deer in its leafy glades, he is really asked to hunt in the game preserves of his own ancestors.

The Schönhausen line of Bismarcks, a very prolific race, has produced several distinguished soldiers, and not a few diplomatists, some of them, it is true, of the Dugald Dalgetty stamp, though none seem to have been wanting in character and talents. Thus we hear of a Captain Ludolph von Bismarck, who served against the Turks under the Elector of Saxony in 1560; and of Ludolf August, who had a very stormy and adventurous career. Lying in garrison at Magdeburg, he slew his

Bismarckian "Dugald Dalgetties."

servant in drink or anger, and fled. But though pardoned for desertion he was not promoted, so leaving the Prussian service in disgust he repaired to Russia, and for complication in some court intrigues was banished to Siberia. Thence recalled by the influence of his friends, he was entrusted, among other tasks of the kind, with a diplomatic mission to London ; and he finally ended his days at Pultawa. Another member, too, of the Schönhausen family was destined to visit Russia in a very honourable capacity, before its present chief went there in 1859 as Minister of the King of Prussia, in the person of General Frederick William von Bismarck, who served in Brunswick, in England (where he had a duel), and lastly in Würtemberg, and was thought so much of as a cavalry critic that the Emperor Nicholas summoned him to St. Petersburg in 1835 to reorganise his Horse. During the campaign of 1870 the Chancellor boasted that since the Huguenot wars there was not one of his ancestors who had not drawn the sword at some time or other against France, either as mercenaries in the cause of religious liberty, or as patriots in that of political freedom ; while several of them had also served in the Thirty Years War, both for and against the Emperor.*

* Dr. Busch records that once during the Franco-German war the Chancellor said :—"Since the battle at ——(I could not catch the name, but it was some battle during the wars of the Huguenots that appeared to be meant), there is not one of my ancestors who has not drawn the sword against France : my father, for instance, and three of his brothers, and my grandfather at Rossbach. My great-grandfather fought against Louis XIV., and his father also against Louis XIV., in the battles on the Rhine in 1672 or 1673. Several of us fought in the Thirty Years War, on the

His great-grandfather, August Frederick von Bismarck, fell as colonel of dragoons at Chotusitz, on that victorious day when, in the words of Carlyle, Frederick's cavalry advanced on the Austrian Horse, "first at a trot, then a gallop—with swords flashing hideous, and eyebrows knit." This heroic ancestor of the Prince was a heavy drinker and a mighty hunter, having in one year, with his own hand, slain as many as 154 red-deer; and the nature of his revels may be inferred from the fact that his toasts were generally accompanied

A soldiering Nimrod

Emperor's side, and others for the Swedes. Finally, there was one who was with the Germans who fought for the Huguenots as hired troops. One of them—his portrait is at Schönhausen—was an original. I have a letter from him to his brother-in-law, in which he says:—'The cask of Rhine wine has cost me thirty reichsthalers. If my brother-in-law thinks it too dear, I will, if God spares me, drink every drop of it myself.' Then again, 'If my brother-in-law asserts so-and-so, I hope I may, if God spares me, get some day closer to him than he will like,' and in another place: 'I have spent 12,000 reichsthalers on the regiment, and I hope, if God spares me, to get it back in time.'" M. Weiss, in an article in the *Figaro* on Prince Bismarck, states what is very curious, if true, that his great-great grandfather Augustus, who died a colonel under the Great Elector, was originally a soldier of fortune in the French service and helped France to gain Alsace. The Chancellor's inspired biographers confine themselves to telling us vaguely that Augustus Bismarck fought "for liberty of conscience" in the Swedish army, in the Count Palatine's regiment; or that he entered, after the battle of Nordlingen, Bernard of Saxe-Weimar's corps, and that up to 1640 he fought in Lorraine and Burgundy. It was just after the Nordlingen disaster that Bernard of Saxe-Weimar concluded with Richelieu the treaty of the four millions. Augustus Bismarck was really what was then called an officer of fortune in the pay of the King of France. His wars and battles in Lorraine and Burgundy can only have been the retreat from Basse Sarre on Metz, 1634, the march on Dijon and St. Jean de Losne, 1633; in short, the whole series of Bernard of Saxe-Weimar's memorable manœuvres, the final result of which was to make Alsace pass into the hands of France. "A Bismarck has taken it from us; a Bismarck had helped to give it us."

by trumpet-blasts and carbine-volleys across the banqueting board, from a section of his troopers. Inheriting many points in the character of this stormful dragoon-colonel, the Chancellor was also supposed when young to be his very image, "so much so, indeed, that when gazing on his portrait, it was like looking at my own face in the glass."

A sentimental ancestor.

A broad contrast to this heavy-drinking, soldiering Nimrod, was presented by his second son and successor, Charles Alexander, who cultivated the muses, read Paris journals, and published a French eulogy of his deceased wife in a style of romantic sentiment compared with which the most lackadaisical effusions of Frederick the Great would seem good taste. But he was affected by the courtly Gallomania of the time, and passed for the intellectual member of his line. His private bent, therefore, was towards the civil service rather than the army;* but being more in want of brave soldiers than brilliant ministers, Frederick caused him, much against his will, to exchange into the army. From this, however, he soon retired with the rank of *Rittmeister*, or cavalry captain, and died in 1797—his slender estate ultimately devolving on his fourth son, Charles William Ferdinand, born in 1771, father of the Chancellor.

A bright, solid, and emphatic-looking gentleman was this paternal parent of the Prince, if his portrait speaks

*Is he the "Herr Minister von Bismarck" mentioned by Carlyle as having granted a warrant to Voltaire for the arrest of a swindling Jew?

true; but, like his father, he grew tired of lying idly in garrison and "measuring out the corn to his men every morning at 4 o'clock" (he had only served in French Flanders under the Duke of Brunswick); so, after the humiliating Peace of Basle, he retired with the rank of captain to indulge his peculiar humours on his own estate. The winter months he generally spent in Berlin, where he is said to have been welcomed as a congenial companion by the gay and fiery nephew of Frederick the Great, Prince Louis Ferdinand, who afterwards fell at Saalfeld. In 1806 Charles William Ferdinand married, and scarcely had he brought his winsome bride of sixteen home to Schönhausen when the terrible news of Jena spread like wild-fire through the Mark, and the French were upon them like the Philistines. Finding the Bismarck mansion deserted of its owners—for they, too, had fled with the rest of the villagers to a neighbouring forest—the disappointed soldiery of Soult played wanton havoc with the household goods, slashing, among other acts of Vandalism, the genealogical tree of the family—all of which must have been listened to in later years by the boy Chancellor with feelings of indignation that could not have tended to soften his treatment of beleaguered Paris, we may be sure.

Bismarck's father.

The mother of the Prince—Louise Wilhelmina—who was nineteen years younger than her husband, was the orphan daughter of Anastasius Ludwig Menken, a cultivated and liberal-minded bureaucrat who helped Frederick the Great to manage

Bismarck's mother.

his foreign affairs, and also served in the same capacity under both his successors with the title of *Geheimrath*, or Privy Councillor—a dignity which defies exact definition, but is very different from the English office of the same name, the bearer of it in Prussia being in general describable as a superior sort of Civil Service clerk, with a salary rarely exceeding £300 a year, paid partly in money and partly in decorations. For a titled gentleman of the Old Mark to break the rules of his caste by wedding the daughter of a bourgeois bureaucrat required no slight moral courage, but the Bismarcks have never been remarkable for timid deference to the prejudices of the world; and, indeed, the wife of Charles William Ferdinand was adorned with personal qualities which amply compensated her in the eyes of her husband for want of birth. Once, when a troop of Lützow's famous Free Corps was quartered at Schönhausen, the mistress of the mansion—mother of the future Chancellor—was found making excellent practice at pistol-shooting with the commander of the Horse;* and in this connection it may be mentioned as a curious fact, which cannot but have had a subsequent effect on the imagination of young Bismarck, that to his father's house for medical treatment was brought Lützow himself, the famous hero of the Liberation War, when wounded not far away at Dodendorf.†

* Related by a member of Lützow's Corps, Dr. Edward Dürre, in his Autobiography, and certified to be accurate in this particular by the Chancellor himself.

† Memoirs of Achaz v. Bismarck, who describes how when Lützow was wounded at Dodendorf, "I stood by my friend and had him carried

Most of the other maternal ancestors of the Chancellor had belonged to the poor but pedigreed gentry of Brandenburg. His great-great-grandmother, for example, was a near relative of that devoted Lieutenant Katté, who expiated on the scaffold his Jonathan-like attachment to Frederick, Prince of Prussia, afterwards the Great; while, through the female line of his ancestry, he also inherited blood which had run in the veins of the celebrated Field-marshal von Derfflinger, conqueror of the Swedes. Thus we see that, on the paternal side, Prince Bismarck is descended from a long line of ancestors belonging to the gentry or lesser noblesse of Brandenburg, who passed their lives in hunting, soldiering, and farming; while his mother was the daughter of a man who, to the cultured graces of an enlightened mind, added the business merits of a Prussian bureaucrat; and it will probably appear in the course of this narrative that its subject has inherited in a singular degree the opposite qualities thus placed within the reach of both his parents.

Ancestry and heredity.

Otto Edward Leopold von Bismarck was the fourth of six children, three of whom died in infancy, leaving the future Prince with a brother and sister—one five years older, and the other twelve years younger, than himself. The former, Bernard, developed into a country magistrate; while the latter, to whom her more gifted brother was

Bismarck's brother and sister.

across the Elbe at Tangermünde to the house of my cousin, the father of the present Envoy at the Diet (in Frankfort), v. Bismarck-Schönhausen."

much devoted, and most of his earlier letters were addressed, became the wife of a Von Arnim-Kröchlendorff, likewise a country squire and justice. A striking instance of human inability to see into the future was presented by the parental announcement in a Berlin newspaper of the birth of the future Chancellor, which, while recording the momentous fact, requested the friends of the family "to dispense with their congratulations."

His infancy.

Though born in Brandenburg, the infancy of the Prince was spent in Pomerania, whither a year after his birth his parents had removed to superintend three inherited estates—Kniephof, Külz, and Jarchelin—in the district of Naugard, half a day's journey north-east of the provincial capital, Stettin. It was, then, at the remote and homely country-house of Kniephof where the retired Captain von Bismarck hunted, handled grain, sold timber, and discussed French politics with the local gentry, that his illustrious son received his first impressions of life. Myths, as of the infant Hercules, have already grown up around the childhood of the slayer of the Napoleonic Lion, but these we leave to nurses and the writers of German picture-books.

The first outstanding fact in the career of the boy is that, at the early age of six, he was placed in the boarding school of Professor Plamann, at Berlin, which was conducted on the Pestalozzi system; and in later days the Chancellor confessed he had nothing but dis-

agreeable recollections of the time he spent there, "where a spurious Spartanism was the rule," and "elastic" meat with parsnips the invariable dish. At the age of twelve he was removed to one of the gymnasia, or public high-schools of the capital, at which, and at another of the same kind, he remained in all five years, living during this time partly with his parents, who used to spend the winter months in Berlin, and partly boarding with his teachers, Professor Prevost and Dr. Bonnel—both gentlemen of Huguenot descent, and likely, therefore, to be imbued with large and liberal ideas. We are told that Dr. Bonnel, who lived to declaim a Latin ode to his illustrious pupil on his return from Königgrätz, was struck by the appearance of young Bismarck on entering his class, and determined to "keep his eye on him." History was the boy's favourite study; and though it was ominous of his future that his relations with his French tutors were always far from satisfactory, he nevertheless laid the foundation of his knowledge both of their language, and of English, which enabled him in after life to surprise Louis Napoleon with the purity of his accent, and to cause Lord Beaconsfield at the Berlin Congress to wonder how its President could ever have acquired such a mastery over the tongue of Burke. On his sixteenth birthday he was confirmed in the Trinity Church of Berlin by the celebrated Schleiermacher; and a year afterwards he passed with credit the final examination entitling him to proceed to any other higher sphere of study. His Latin style at

At school.

Studies.

this time was described as "*lucida ac Latina, sed non satis castigata.*" *

But while he had thus been favoured with the very best preparatory education procurable, care was also taken to preserve in him that healthy equilibrium between the mental and the physical powers, the neglect of which causes the ordinary German schoolboy to resemble a sickly hot-house plant. During the frequent holiday visits to his Pomeranian home, young Bismarck had an opportunity of developing those fine athletic energies which the cross-bar of the play-ground is wholly impotent to arouse. Devoted to all manly sports, he was a swift runner and a capital jumper; and he learned to swim, to fence, to row, to ride, and to shoot. With his rifle he could decapitate a duck at a hundred paces, and in revolver practice also his aim was deadly. A story is told of his having gone one day to the rooms of his brother, when, finding him out, he took down his cavalry pistols and playfully whiled away the

Fondness for sports.

* "When I was in the highest form at school," said Bismarck once, "I wrote and spoke Latin very well. Now it has become difficult to me, and I have quite forgotten my Greek. I don't understand why people spend so much labour on them. Perhaps merely because scholars do not like to lessen the value of what they themselves acquired with so much difficulty. But if it is contended that Greek gives 'mental discipline,' Russian does so in a still higher degree. People might introduce Russian at once instead of Greek; there would be immediate practical use in that. It has innumerable niceties to make up for the incompleteness of its conjugation, and the eight-and-twenty declensions they used to have were capital for the memory. Now, indeed, they have only three, but then the exceptions are all the more numerous. And how the roots are changed; in many words only a single letter remains."—*Dr. Busch.*

time with target-practice at the book-case, to the no small consternation of the neighbours.

In particular he was taught to ride like a Centaur, an accomplishment in which he was peculiarly fitted by nature to excel; and so well did he attend to the precepts of his father in this respect that the old Rittmeister, when especially pleased with the equestrian feats of his daring son, used to remark that he had a seat like Pluvenel, Master of the Horse to Louis Quatorze, or like Hilmar Cura who had been riding-master to Frederick the Great. Without, too, having had that cross-country training which can only be got in England, the Prince in his earlier days went full at his object with the rectilinearity of the most reckless hunter in all the shires; and he has himself recorded that, if he has fallen from his horse once, he must have done so at least fifty times. Even in later days he broke three of his ribs thus at Varzin; and the story of some of his earlier rides sounds like the mere account of a struggle between horse and man to keep uppermost.* Endurance he united to skill, and the practice he gained by careering across the moors of Pomerania to inspect his farms, or attend a county ball or a drinking bout, was the secret of the great strength

A Pomeranian Centaur.

* "Once before," said Bismarck, during the French war, "I had a remarkable fall. I was on the road home with my brother, and we were riding as fast as the horses would go. Suddenly my brother, who was a little in front, heard a frightful crack. It was my head, which had knocked on the road. . . . . On another occasion, too, I had such a serious fall from my horse, that when the doctor examined my hurts, he said it was contrary to all professional rules that I had not broken my neck."

which enabled him in earnest after years to dismount in astonishingly fresh condition after having been thirteen fasting hours at a stretch in the saddle both at Sadowa and Sedan.

At school Otto Von Bismarck had passed for a boy of quick intelligence and great power of work, though of shy and retiring disposition, not much given to forming friendships; but at the Hanoverian University of Göttingen, whither he afterwards repaired, in 1832, as a tall, slim youth of seventeen—"as thin as a knitting-needle"—with the ostensible purpose of studying law, his whole nature seemed to become suddenly changed. The German Universities chiefly present themselves to the national youth as so many evergreen oases, where it may rest from the grinding routine of previous school-life, and fortify itself for the arid expanse of social tyranny and State-servitude still ahead; and the national youth enjoys the blessed interval of repose with all the wild abandonment of emancipated slaves. Idleness becomes their serious occupation; the human race, with them, undergoes a new classification into "philosophic youth" and "Philistines;" and social convention becomes more criminal in their eyes than the despotism of French kings seemed to the revolutionaries of 1789. And while thus asserting their opening manhood they fancy they are leading a life of high romantic liberty—which consists in consuming cargoes of tobacco, in going to bed as barrels of beer and in rising as beer-barrels, in quarrelling with each other on a slighter pretext than would have served

At the University.

as the basis of a street-brawl between the serving-men of Montague and Capulet, and in hacking one another's faces into the brutal semblance of a butcher's board.

Now, of all the rufflers of this stamp at Göttingen, Otto von Bismarck in his time was chief. He got himself up in the traditional long-boots, velvet jacket, and saucer cap; he flaunted the colours of his corps (or fighting club); he sported a pipe a yard long; and he led about a ferocious mastiff without being at all particular as to whether it had on the regulation *Maulkorb*, or muzzle, with which in later years he vainly tried to gag the mouths of mordant deputies.* "Dominus de Bismarck" was not long in becoming acquainted with the inside of the Carcer, or University prison; indeed, he had not been twenty-four hours in Göttingen when he was summoned by the rector to answer to a charge of serious misconduct, and it was characteristic of his cool audacity that he and his dog sauntered in before his academic judge in a costume which seemed to have equally shared its patronage between the dressing-room, the barracks, and the promenade. Otto Von Bismarck spent three semesters at Göttingen, and some idea of the combativeness of the man may be gathered from the fact that during this time he fought no fewer than twenty-eight duels, in each of which, being tall and keen of sight, he drew blood from his opponent;

Wild student days.

* Spring of 1879, when he submitted a law for restraining licence of speech in Parliament—the so-called "Muzzle Measure," or *Maulkorbgesetz.*

while only once did he receive a scar—still visible on the left cheek—by the accidental breaking of his adversary's blade. Several of the men who thus had to confess the force of Bismarck's arm were also destined in later years to feel the bite of his tongue; and there is no saying to what extent the systematic opposition of the diminutive Dr. Windthorst, leader of the Clericals, to the towering Chancellor may not have been prompted by the recollection of duello defeats inflicted on him at Göttingen. Indeed, His Highness once complained in the Prussian Chamber that the business of government was sadly hampered by the mere wanton spirit of hostility and love of fighting contracted by honourable members at the Universities, a reproach which had not been many hours across his lips before one deputy challenged another on the ground of insulted honour.*

Duelling.

It was not to be expected that a student who spent so much of his time in the fencing-school and the beer-house could cultivate even a nodding acquaintance with the spirit of Justinian, and it was the talk of the place when Bismarck went to lecture. One eminent professor declared that, though enrolled among his hearers, he had never once had the pleasure of seeing him in his class-room. The fame of his prowess with the foils had spread to the neighbouring Jena (where fighting clubs first arose), and the hero of nearly thirty duels was invited thither to be fêted by the bellicose youth of

* Herren von Bennigsen and von Ludwig, in the first week of February, 1881.

that charming old abode of the muses on the Saale; but the dons of Göttingen, thinking it enough that one University should have been misled by the wild Pomeranian Junker, sent over the proctor to fetch him back. But frolicsome and effervescent as he was, it appears that even then he also had his serious and reflective moments when the dim feeling of his life-task stirred within him; and it said much for the "burschicose" Otto von Bismarck in this respect, that he often enjoyed congenial converse with one of his fellow-students, a pensive American lad called John Lothrop Motley—one afterwards to become the best history-maker, and the other one of the best history-writers of the nineteenth century.*

A companion —J. L. Motley.

* The relationship of the two celebrities was not broken off here. In 1833 both Bismarck and Motley migrated to Berlin to continue their studies, and lived together in the closest intimacy as fellow lodgers, sharing meals and amusements. They frequently met again in later years, and when, after the Danish war, Bismarck went to Vienna to settle the terms of peace, he found his old companion installed there as United States Minister. In 1872, also, after a somewhat capricious and ungrateful country had induced him to abandon the double career of a diplomatist and an historian, Motley spent a week at Varzin with the Chancellor on the occasion of the latter's silver-wedding, and discussed with him his great achievements. The publisher of the *Public Ledger* in Philadelphia having sent the Prince at Varzin a cane made from the wood of Independence Hall, the latter acknowledged the gift in the following interesting letter:—"Varzin, July 4, 1875. Dear Sir,—You have had the goodness to send me, as a support for my old days, a cane made from the tower from whose heights, ninety-nine years ago, the bell was rung for the first time in honour of that great commonwealth whose ship bells now sound their full and welcome tongues in all harbours of the world. For this historical treasure I beg you to accept my heartiest thanks. I shall honour it, carefully preserve it, and, with other relics of remarkable years, bequeath it to my children. This day is one of those which always recall to my mind the happy hours that I have spent on many a Fourth of July with American friends, the first time with John Lothrop Motley, Mitchell G. King, and

And the times, though forming part of the Thirty Years' Peace, were not without their pregnant signs. The "three July days" had again drawn the attention of politicians to France; the Polish rebellion had not long been quenched in blood; and Germany was beginning to open its cities to the seeds of that Revolution which, in a few years more, was to shoot up and make the tour of Europe. Young Bismarck had not been many days at Göttingen when he must have heard of the great political demonstration at Hambach,* in the Palatinate, when a mass meeting, attended by about 30,000, was addressed by fiery orators who declared the sovereignty of the people to be the basis of all States, and urged the unification and republicanising of Germany. With all his duelling and rioting, too, the careless Göttingen student had his own thoughts on the subject. "The most remarkable thing," said the Chancellor during the French campaign, when once referring to his stay at Göttingen, "is that I must even there have had the ideas and hopes which have now by God's help been realised, although my attitude to the Unity party was then only adverse." The current of his opening thoughts on the subject may be traced by the fact that he wagered five-and-twenty bottles of champagne with an American—the

Signs of the times.

A Wager.

Amory Coffin, in 1832, at Göttingen. I only wish that you, my dear sir and I could always be as sound and happy as we four lusty fellows, when, forty-three years ago, we celebrated the Fourth of July at Göttingen.—Von Bismarck."

* On 27th May, 1832.

winner to stand, and the loser to cross the sea for it—that Germany would be united in twenty years;* but this period was too short by nearly a half.

In 1833 Bismarck exchanged Göttingen for Berlin, for a German student rarely contents himself with one University; but, though his opportunities of acquiring knowledge were thus increased, it did not strike his friends that there was any marked improvement in his industry. The celebrated Savigny then attracted crowds of pupils, but the celebrity of Savigny was powerless to allure the future Chancellor of Germany to listen to his lectures more than twice. But work at the last he must have done, and that, too, with the enormous concentration of his riper powers; for that he passed his State examination in law, with credit at least, if not with brilliancy, argued that he must have crammed the labour of six semesters into one. It does not appear that at this time Bismarck had any predilection for the career which he afterwards embraced; but, while indifferent as to gratifying the ambition of his mother, who discovered in her son the making of a great diplomatist, he recognised the prudence of qualifying himself for the discharge of those executive duties which were likely to devolve upon him in after life as a country gentleman.

Passing examinations.

Soon, therefore, after passing his first State exami-

* "In 1853," said the Prince once, according to Busch, "I thought of the bet, and intended to go across the sea for it; but, upon inquiry, I found my man was dead. He had just the sort of name that promised no length of life—Coffin!"

nation, he was sworn in as Auscultator,* or official law-reporter, at one of the Berlin tribunals; and for a year or more he devoted himself to the performance of his duties with a conscientiousness and an energy which made him sometimes almost forget both the deference he owed the bench and the courtesy due to suitors. "Sir," he once angrily exclaimed to an intractable witness; "sir, take care, or I'll have you kicked out!" "Herr Auscultator," interposed the judge, "the kicking out is my business." "Sir," once more cried the Herr Auscultator, in a threatening tone, on the cross-examination proceeding with no better result, "sir, take care, or I'll get the judge to kick you out"—an incident we may regard as the first clear enunciation of that policy of force in recent Prussian history, which has repeatedly "kicked out" intractable Parliaments and dethroned monarchs.

Law-reporter-ship.

But his official duties at Berlin by no means claimed his whole attention, and young Bismarck now began to cultivate that acquaintance with the world which is a very much rarer accomplishment with his countrymen, as a rule, than a knowledge of Bynkershoek and of Bentham, and which was far more serviceable to him in recon-

A dancing diplomatist.

* "My fellow Auscultators," says Herr Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, "were Auscultators. They dressed and digested, and talked articulate words; other vitality showed they almost none. Small speculation in those eyes that they did glare withal! Sense neither for the high, nor for the deep, nor for aught human or divine, save only for the faintest scent of coming preferment."

structing the map of Europe than would have been the profoundest study of all the treatises on international law that were ever penned. He began to go much into the gay society of the capital, which he found to be given up to talking in a tone of "malicious impotence," and to have "plenty of apparent, but no real, good breeding"—a state of things which some good judges think has not even yet sensibly changed for the better. One ambassador used to give balls, where his guests danced till three in the morning but got nothing to eat. At length young Bismarck and a couple of friends who frequented these assemblies rebelled against this festive system, and once, on its growing late, boldly produced some sandwiches and devoured them with an ostentatious air of hunger—a hint which duly took effect next time, while making martyrs of its authors. It was about this time, too, that the future German Emperor first met the man who was to give him his crown, little thinking of it certainly at the time. At a court ball Herr von Bismarck was introduced to the Prince of Prussia, along with another legal colleague about as tall and strapping as himself. "Well," quoth the soldierly Prince, with the true eye of a Hohenzollern for a likely grenadier, "well, Justice seems to cull her young recruits according to the standard of the Guards."

Bismarck and the Prince of Prussia.

In 1836 Bismarck, having absolved his Auscultatorship, was transferred, in the higher capacity of Referendary, to Aix-la-Chapelle, the ancient coronation-city of the German Emperors. Here he was attached not to

the legal, but the administrative department of the district, which had come into the possession of Prussia in 1815, his chief being an uncle of that Harry von Arnim of whom the world was afterwards to hear so much. But the secrets of government were not so attractive to the young official as the international society with which this fashionable watering-place then abounded; and we hear of his consorting much with foreigners, especially with the English. The Duke of Cleveland is even said to have pronounced him "quite an Englishman;" * but perhaps this dictum of His Grace referred to those pugnacious qualities of the British race which Bismarck is alleged to have once displayed in the streets of Aix-la-Chapelle. Gazing at a high processional rite he failed to imitate the genuflecting on-lookers, or even doff his hat, and was most rudely reminded of the omission by a Catholic boor, who received from the object of his aggression immediate cause to regret that the "Kulturkampf" had not yet advanced from the physical into the moral phase.

Referendary at Aix-la-Chapelle.

The next and last stage in the preliminary official training of Bismarck was at Potsdam, whither he was transferred, in 1837, to serve in the Crown Office of that district. For punctuality and subjection to his superiors he had never yet been remarkable, but there was now given him an opportunity of displaying these qualities as a one-year volunteer in the *Jäger*, or Sharpshooters of

* We quote this story from Herr von Köppen, one of the Prince's biographers.

the Guard—which he entered about this time to absolve his military service. There is no more pensive occupation than that of a sentry in a solitary place; and young Bismarck had now ample opportunity of reviewing the past and revolving the future when, with musket on shoulder, it was his turn to pace the midnight terraces of Sans Souci, with the spirits of the Great Frederick and his mighty men still hovering around. His military year, begun at Potsdam, was finished at Greifswald, whither he had got himself transferred in order to make simultaneous use of his time by attending lectures on agriculture and other practical subjects. For paternal extravagance had sadly encumbered the family estates, and the father offered to retire to Schönhausen, entrusting the management of his Pomeranian property to the care of his two sons. Here, then, till events ripened, and a better career offered, was congenial enough employment for him who had now begun to grope about for his true calling like blinded Polyphemus in his cave; and it was a fitting, if an easy stage in the apprenticeship of the man who was to resuscitate the German Empire, that he should first be called upon to restore the shattered fortunes of his own house.

As a soldier.

For about the next eight years, therefore, or from the age of twenty-four to that of thirty-two (when he married and appeared upon the political stage) we find Bismarck living, so to speak, out in the wilderness—oscillating between Pomerania and the Old Mark, farming, hunting,

Out in the wilderness.

146737

soldiering, carousing, studying, acting as local deputy and magistrate, and rubbing off the rust of country life with occasional excursions into the great world. He had scarcely been installed a year in his Pomeranian home when there occurred an event which drew him to Berlin, and must have given him food enough for reflection during the winter months, amid all his cares of "night-frosts, sick oxen, bad rape, and worse roads, dead lambs, half-starved sheep, want of straw, fodder, money, potatoes, and manure."

A memorable spectacle.

On the 7th June, 1840, died King Frederick William III., and his son Frederick William IV. reigned in his stead. What his predecessor had often promised, yet never given, the people now fairly expected from their new Sovereign; but, instead of granting them a Constitution, he merely flung them an amnesty. In October of the same year there was a high State ceremony* in Berlin, and old Captain von Bismarck with his two sons went up to see it. Conspicuous on a canopied platform, before the royal castle, did the new King solemnly vow to the various representatives of the nation who had crowded thither to swear allegiance to him, that "he would rule in the fear of God and in the love of men, with open eyes when it concerned the wants of his people, but with closed ones in matters of justice." And then, with fervour in

* *Huldigung*, or "Homaging," a ceremony in Prussia which generally takes the place of coronation. Of all the Kings of Prussia, only two, the first one, Frederick I. and William I. (German Emperor) have hitherto been crowned (at Königsberg), and then, too, by themselves, as emphasising their claim to reign by divine right.

his voice, he asked them whether "with heart and soul, and word and deed, in the sacred faith of Germans, and the still more sacred love of Christians, they would help and assist him to maintain Prussia *as it was*, and as it must always remain if it were not to perish;" to which all the gazing (but surely not listening) multitude acclaimed with a loud, enthusiastic "*Ja!*" Before the lapse of seven short years that much-too-sentimental multitude was to repent them bitterly of the verbal contract which their thoughtless patriotism had wrung from them, and cancel it, too, in blood—as we shall afterwards see.

Returned to Pomerania, Herr von Bismarck threw himself heart and soul into the task that was before him, and he seems to have had as little notion that a country life was not his true vocation, as Oliver Cromwell at one time never doubted that he was born to be a grazier. In fact, not to speak of later resemblances in their career, the early life of the Pomeranian squire had much in common with that of the Huntingdonshire farmer, albeit the passion for prayer-meetings and communion with the Saints might not have been equally strong in both. Bismarck now attended fairs, sold wool, inspected timber, handled grain, drove hard bargains, gathered rents, and sat as deputy in the local Diet. It was surely a poor enough beginning for the man on whose diplomatic utterances all Europe afterwards came to hang, that his first speech in the rural assembly treated of "the excessive consumption of tallow in the workhouse."

Resemblance to Oliver Cromwell.

Humble in his *début* as an orator, he has recorded that his first attempt at journalism proved a total failure. But with all his manifold sorrows he had a splendid appetite and "slept like a badger," despite such interruptions as the "melancholy howling of the sheep-dog, locked up for immoderate love of hunting."

"I have been writing and walking all day in the sun," he wrote to his sister, "and yesterday looked on at the dancing in Plathe, and drank a good deal of Montebello champagne." And again, "ever almost since the wool-market I have been representing our roving Landrath" (his brother Bernard); "have held with much energy many a court in the hottest of weathers, and driven so constantly through the sandy pines that I and my horses have already had more than enough of this business. And now, after barely a week's quiet, I have again to begin to serve my country as a soldier."

Tedious to him also was the life he led with his father at Schönhausen—

"Reading, smoking, walking, helping him to eat lampreys, and joining in a farce called fox-hunting . . . . . Besides which we inspect the orangery twice a day, the sheep-pens once, and the four thermometers in the parlour every hour . . . . so that, with such a multitude of things to do, you can readily fancy I have had no time to visit the parsons, as they have no vote at the district elections."

"Mad Bismarck."

If his life, however, in the Mark was dull, he took care to give it a very different complexion in Pomerania, where he soon came to be the talk and the terror of the neighbourhood. His wild ways, his dancings, his demon-like rides, and his drinking bouts, soon procured him an uncanny name, and he was known in the district as "mad Bismarck." "Æsthetic teas" were not at all to his taste, but he

would willingly gallop twenty or thirty miles after a hard day's work to a county ball. His wine-cellar was his first care, and we find him bewailing the loss of one of his carts, with its load of "three casks of spirits," which had been carried away by a flood. A worthy successor at Kniephof to that ancestor of his whose toasts were accompanied by volleys of musketry, Bismarck often relieved his rural solitude by entertaining the boldest spirits from the surrounding garrisons, and he easily bore away the bell among a set of boon companions by whom the strongest headed three-bottle men of a past era would very speedily have been put under the table.* He quaffed huge cups of mixed champagne and porter, he awoke his guests in the morning by firing off pistols close to their ears, and he terrified his lady-cousins by turning foxes into the drawing-room. With a character of this kind, therefore, it was surely no wonder that, having once plunged into an election contest, he "emerged with the certainty that four voters were inclined to go in for me for life or death, and two more with a certain amount of lukewarmness, . . . so that I thought on the whole I had better retire."

But this, after all, was only one side of his character. Revel frequently gave place to reflection, and

* "Formerly," said the Chancellor once during the French campaign, "feats of that sort" (alluding to his once emptying a large hornful of champagne at a single draught) "were the indispensable passports into the diplomatic service. They drank the weak-headed ones below the table, then asked them all sorts of things they wanted to know, and forced them to make concessions beyond their authority, to which they also induced them to sign their names, and on the poor fellows getting sober they could never imagine how their signatures got there."—*Busch.*

parcels of the newest books, as well as "casks of spirits," were addressed to Herr von Bismarck. History in particular seems to have engaged much of his thoughts. Even the works of the sceptic Jew, Spinoza, which Lessing declared to contain all true philosophy, he studied deeply; and also, according to some, pondered the maxims of Machiavelli's "Prince." There are signs even that during these fits of solitary study he betrayed an occasional tendency, despite his healthy nature, to become slightly "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;" but a potent antidote to this enervating disease was the stirring military life into which he now and then relapsed. By the laws of his country he was compelled to serve it further as a soldier, but the laws of his country could not have compelled him to do anything which tallied so much with his own natural bent. There is even reason to believe that, in his distracting search for a profession when "out in the wilderness," he seriously thought at one time of procuring a commission. It is certain at least that, on pretence of enjoying the agreeable society of certain young officers, he served for several months in 1843 as lieutenant in a Pomeranian regiment of Lancers to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the routine of the cavalry arm, to which he was most partial. In the previous year he had also done duty with the Stargard Lancers of the Landwehr;* and it was at this time that he gained his first decoration, for saving the life of his groom,

Spirits and Spinoza.

Bismarck's first medal.

* Territorial army, or second reserve force.

who had fallen into deep water while watering his horse.* Without a moment's hesitation he plunged in, and at great personal risk succeeded in bringing his servant safe to bank—a feat for which he received the coveted Prussian medal "for rescuing from danger," and this simple recognition of merit continued to be as highly prized by its wearer as any of the proudest orders of Christendom subsequently conferred upon him.

It was fortunate, however, for Germany that the

* The name of the groom was Hildebrandt. He had a brother who had likewise served under Bismarck at Schönhausen, and both afterwards emigrated to America, like hundreds and thousands of their conscript countrymen. Towards the end of 1881 the former died, and the survivor wrote from Chicago to the Prince informing him of the fact, and of other family events. The Chancellor at once sent off to his old domestic the following letter, which deserves to be quoted as revealing some very homely and touching traits in the character of its author:—"Berlin, 27th December, 1881. DEAR HILDEBRANDT,—I received your letter of the 9th instant, and was glad to see you are well, though the lapse of time has not spared you cause for mourning. Your brother would seem to have been older than I thought. It was not, however, at Soldin, but at Lippehne where he was nearly drowned" (not, be it noted, "where I saved his life"). "In 1857 your first wife was quite a young girl, and could not, therefore, have been old when she died. I am glad you are living happily with your present one, and that she still thinks of Germany. August is likely to have become a fine Yankee gentleman (by this time). I am pretty well off in so far as my own ones are still alive and well by the grace of God, and as my daughter has presented me with two grand-children. My sons, I am sorry to say, are not yet married, but both, thank God, are well, which, unfortunately, cannot always be said of my wife, and of myself not at all. I no longer hunt now, and ride but seldom, being too languid, and if I do not take rest my life-strength will soon be all used up. How old are you now, and what kind of employment have you, or have you already given up work? You can tell your wife that Lauenburg" (of which the Prince was presumably told she was a native) "is blooming. I was there last autumn again for the first time these thirty years; am also holder of the freedom of that city, and have, therefore, especial cause to greet your wife.—V. BISMARCK."

friends of Bismarck, who believed himself best cut out for a farmer or a soldier, took a higher view of his capacities. His ambitious mother, who died in 1839, had formed a high opinion of her son's fitness for the diplomatic career, and was not even shaken in her conviction by the theatrical airs and wildness he had brought back from the University; while his brother Bernard declared that both by taste and education he was made for State-service, and would enter it sooner or later. It was probably, therefore, less the dictates of his own judgment than deference to that of his friends which induced him once more to return from Pomerania to Potsdam to continue his activity as Referendary in the Crown Office, and prepare himself for that final examination demanded of every one aspiring to the higher offices of State. But his stay here was as short as his passing of the examination was unattempted. Nevertheless, he left his mark behind.

Worldly prospects.

He had been called upon to draw up a report on the compensation of certain properties bound to suffer by some projected improvements, and one sentence of this exquisite paper, still preserved, speaks volumes for the audacious character of the writer. "You could not," he wrote with horseplay humour, "pay me in cash if you were to turn the pleasure-garden of my father into a carp-pond, or the grave of my deceased aunt into an eel-swamp!" It was little wonder that the spectacled superiors of this defiant Junker should not have altogether treated him with the deference readily paid by

them to obsequious dulness. Bismarck soon after, having occasion to return to the country for a time, called upon his chief for the purpose of asking a holiday. The chief kept him waiting in the ante-room, on the window of which, to while away the time, his subordinate began to drum in sharp crescendo-wise the stirring "Old Dessauer" march, which he has more than once referred to as a kind of Paternoster of the Prussian patriot. "What do you want?" at last exclaimed the pedantic chief, not unwilling to be relieved from this martial accompaniment to his red-tape labours. "What?" returned his subordinate, with the most innocent air in the world. "Oh, I merely came to beg for leave of absence; but now you have given me time to reflect, and I think I had better leave you altogether!" Surely his dumbfounded chief must have felt inclined to repeat the words of Hamlet to Polonius, when the latter begged most humbly to take leave of his honourable lord: "You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal."

An audacious Junker.

Bismarck had been offered the post of Landrath, or administrative chief of an arrondissement; but this he declined, though we have seen from one of his letters that he once acted as substitute for his brother, who had been invested with this function in the district of their Pomeranian estates. Whether he humbly deemed such a rural magistracy above his merits, or whether, feeling within himself the promptings of superior power, he determined to wait for higher things,

does not appear; but it is certain, at least, that about this time he was tortured with doubts as to the true direction of his future career. It is even said that he seriously thought of going abroad —a scheme, as one writer observes, which makes the mind involuntarily turn to Cromwell, who once intended to embark for America on the eve of the Long Parliament. There was still no National Assembly for him to enter, and to aspire to a seat in a local Diet was to be animated with the ambition of a vestryman. A country magistracy could not tempt him. With all his love of soldiering he felt conscious of powers that would be thrown away on the army in piping times of peace; and the only thing for him to do, therefore, was to stick to his farming till circumstances already in the mould of time should shape his future path.

In doubt as to his career.

Meanwhile, he sought occasional distraction in travel from the cares, and doubts, and dissipations that beset him—visiting, among other countries, France and England, to both of which he was afterwards to return under greatly altered conditions. His own account of his first impressions of England is amusing. Landing at Hull on a Sunday he began to whistle gaily, but was instantly checked by a Sabbatarian native who solemnly reminded him that it was the first day of the week. Disgusted beyond measure by this "perfectly horrible tyranny of keeping holy the Sabbath," Bismarck turned at once upon his heel and set sail for Edinburgh, "as I did not choose not to be able to whistle when I had a mind to"

In England.

—which betrayed a truly touching ignorance in the traveller as to the relative state of Sabbatarian liberty in the sister kingdom.*

A powerful swimmer and a fearless sailor, he was also a frequent visitor to the watering-places of his own country, and took supreme delight in "grasping a herring with his own hands in the depths of the Baltic." One of his letters humorously describes the incidents of a sojourn he made in the island of Norderney in the autumn of 1844, where

Holiday amusements.

* Once, in relating this story in the Reichstag (9th May, 1885) in connection with a debate on compulsory Sunday observance (which he refused to advocate in the Federal Council), Bismarck said:—"I must say that when I was in England I always had a painful and uncomfortable impression of the English Sunday; and I was always glad when it was over. I am sure, too, that many Englishmen had the same feeling about it, for they sought to accelerate the march of time (on that day), without witnesses, in a manner which I would rather not characterise, and were overjoyed when Monday dawned. Whoever has lived in English society will understand what I mean. On the other hand, if you go into the country around Berlin, if it does not exactly happen to be near a brewery, and look at the villages, you are pleased with the appearance of the people in their holiday garb, and thank God that we live not under the yoke of an English Sunday." By one deputy reference had been made to Sunday observance in England and America, and to the consequent superiority of these countries to Germany from an industrial point of view. But the Prince contended that this alleged superiority was due to very different causes—in England, more especially, to the fact of its possessing great contiguous stores of coal and iron, and to the further circumstance that it enjoyed a start of several centuries in the race of civilisation. It could be estimated, said the Chancellor, from many indications, that in the time of Shakespeare, or about three centuries ago, there was in England a degree of material comfort, civilisation, and literary development which Germany was then far from possessing. Germany had been thrown back by the Thirty Years' War more than any other nation. Nevertheless, he could not admit that the English, on the whole, were better Christians than his own countrymen; and, as for Sunday observance, there was a great deal of mere habit in it.

his *table d'hôte* companions were a "scraggy Danish lady," who "filled him with sadness and homesickness;" a "Russian officer, built like a bootjack;" and an old Prussian minister with a nightmare kind of figure—"a fat frog without legs who opened his mouth as wide as his shoulders, like a carpet bag, for every morsel, compelling his *vis-à-vis* to cling to the table for sheer giddiness." He "made excellent friends," too, with the sea, and found himself as much at ease in the bilge of a fishing boat as on the back of a horse—an accomplishment which must have stood him in great stead when, with "Tomke Hams," he was "knocked about for twenty-four hours in a small boat, with not a dry stitch on, but with plenty of ham and port wine, by a storm which threw up twenty vessels of various nationalities on the islands round about." Sailing out for some hours every day in order to enjoy fishing and seal-shooting, he only managed to kill one of these creatures "with such a gentle dog-face and large beautiful eyes that I was really sorry for it"—an incident which should be considered by those who assert that there is nothing whatever in the Chancellor but iron, and that he can gaze upon a ghastly battlefield of his own creation without ever so much as wincing.

At sea.

Meanwhile, great national events were beginning to ripen, and private ones, too, tended to shape his public attitude to them. By the death of his father, in 1845, the family property was re-divided between the two brothers; Bismarck himself receiving Kniephof, one of the three

Public and private events.

Pomeranian estates, and also the ancestral seat at Schönhausen, to which he now repaired for good. For the next two years, therefore, he continued his country life as before, though not of the pleasantest, being much engrossed with "lawsuits, sporting matters, and embankment affairs." For he had been appointed district Superintendent of the Elbe Dykes, an unsalaried public office he was all the readier to undertake, as its careful performance materially affected the state of his own property. That his thoughts, however, were not wholly taken up with floods and failing crops we see from a letter to his sister, wherein he announces his intention of "carrying off your husband to a sitting of the Society for Improving the Lot of the Working Classes, to be held at Potsdam on the 7th March" (1846). But beneficence, like charity, begins at home, and we also gather that it was now his chief aim, not so much to better the state of others, as to ameliorate his own. We hear of his having been previously "in love for twenty-four hours;" but about the time of his father's death he became alive to the terrible truth that he

"must marry, the devil take me. . . . . I feel lonely and forsaken, and this mild, damp weather makes me melancholy and longingly prone to love. . . . . It is no use my struggling. I shall have to marry; everybody wills it so, and nothing seems more natural, as both of us have been left behind. She makes no impression on me, it is true, but that is the case with all of them; still, fortunate are those who cannot change their inclination with their linen—however seldom the latter event may occur!"

He must marry.

The lady of his choice.

But there was one exception to the rule in the person of Johanna, the daughter of Heinrich von Puttkamer,* of Viatlum in Pomerania; and this young lady Bismarck asked to become his wife. But the careful parents, well aware of the awful reputation of the wooer, were much less enamoured of him than was their only daughter; and they could only be brought to surrender their treasure after a method of attack which was unconscious training for the man who was afterwards to force the capitulation of Paris. On the 28th of July, 1847, Bismarck was married to this lady, who was nine years his junior, but the ideal of a German wife; and a union was thus formed in which the most unscrupulous enemies of the Prince have never even affected to find the slightest flaw.†

* A near relative of that Herr von Puttkamer who was afterwards chosen by the Chancellor to succeed Dr. Falk, Minister of Public Worship, when the author of the May Laws resigned office on its being found expedient to temper the too vigorous operation of these Draconian Edicts, and pave the way for peace between Church and State.

† Of this marriage the issue were one daughter and two sons. Marie Elizabeth Johanna, born 21st August, 1848, was married, November, 1878, to Count Kuno Rantzau, member of a Schleswig-Holstein family, and employed in the German Foreign Office. By this alliance the Chancellor has repeatedly been made a grandfather. The Countess Marie Bismarck had been previously engaged to a Count Eulenburg, who died of typhus fever at Varzin, while on a visit to his betrothed. Of the two sons, the elder, Count Herbert, was born 28th December, 1849, and after studying at Frankfort, Berlin, and Bonn, joined the 1st Prussian Dragoon Guards as a one-year volunteer, serving against the French in 1870. In 1873 he entered the Foreign Office, and was attached to missions at Munich and Dresden successively, becoming then Secretary of Legation at Bern, though continuing to act mainly as private secretary to his father. In 1878 he acted as one of the assistant secretaries to the Congress of Berlin; and after being attached to the German Embassies at London and St. Petersburg, he was made Minister at the Hague, as a preliminary step

Though the Prince actually married after entering Parliament, we have thought it right to anticipate by a few months the main private event of his life, the better to give a rounded unity to our story; but we must now close this chapter, which was merely intended to portray the Prince's career up to his appearance on the public stage of his country, when our narrative must necessarily become more political than personal. What chiefly determined Bismarck to reside in the Old Mark, instead of in Pomerania, was the fact, as we have seen, that he was made a District Water Bailiff of the Elbe, added to the certain prospect of his being returned to the Landtag, or provincial Diet of Prussian Saxony—one of those eight so-called autonomic Assemblies, or Zemstvos, which were all the Prussian people had hitherto attained in the shape of representative government. Elected he was, too, as vicarious Knight's Deputy for his native arrondissement; and when, on the 3rd February, 1847, Frederick William IV., in all the pompous generosity of his divine-right omnipotence, deigned to decree the

Elected to the Landtag.

to his appointment, in May, 1885, as Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The Prince's younger son William, generally called Count Bill, in person most resembling his father, was born at Frankfort, on 1st August, 1852; also studied for the Civil Service, though devoting himself more to a parliamentary and administrative than a diplomatic career. As member of the Reichstag, he made his maiden speech in the session of 1880 as champion of a bill for the penal suppression of usury; but though, like his father, no orator, he is a steady Conservative voter. Count Bill also joined the army, and both brothers, when mere lads, were wounded in the brilliant and sacrificial charge of the Prussian Dragoon Guards at Mars-la-Tour. In 1885 he married his cousin, Sibylla von Arnim-Kröchlendorff, the daughter of the Chancellor's only sister.

formation of a quasi-Parliament consisting of the eight united Diets of the monarchy, Herr von Bismark-Schönhausen (for thus the name is spelt in the records of the time) repaired to Berlin as knightly substitute for the real representative of his district, who had fallen ill.

Personal appearance.

At this time Bismarck was in his thirty-second year, in the bloom of early manhood; of very tall, stalwart, and imposing mien, with blue, penetrating, fearless eyes; of a bright, fresh countenance, with blond hair and beard—a singular contrast to the appearance of the bald and grizzly eye-browed Chancellor, after the fire of youth had gone out and left his thick moustache in ashes.

CHAPTER II.

PARLIAMENTARY CAREER.

1.—*Prussian Constitutionalism.*

Bismarck's career as a parliamentary deputy lasted, with several intervals, for about four years—or from April, 1847, till May, 1851—when he was appointed secretary to the Prussian representative at the Germanic Diet; and in the comparatively few speeches he made during this time—for he was probably the least loquacious of all his fellow-members—the whole political character of the man was plainly revealed. By his intimate friends he had hitherto been regarded as "somewhat of a Liberal," but it will be for the reader to determine how far the estimate was just. The better, however, to realise the peculiarity of his political views, let us briefly consider the antecedents and nature of the singular Assembly in which he first expressed them.

As a Parliamentary Deputy.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was about as little representative government in Prussia as in Turkey or in Timbuctoo, and it said much for the comparative wisdom of her absolute rulers that they had not hitherto been forced by throat-grasping Revolution to share their power with

the people. Constitutionalism is a plant which has never been found to thrive in the same garden with the doctrine of divine right, and this principle of sovereignty was never half so vehemently asserted even by the Stuarts as by the Hohenzollerns. Frederick I., in 1701, placed the crown upon his own head in token, not that he had bribed and bargained it out of Kaiser Leopold, as was the sober truth, but that he had received it without episcopal mediation direct from the King of Kings; and, during the whole of his reign, the sole Constitution enjoyed by his subjects was summed up in the maxim—*A Deo Rex, a Rege Lex.* The only Parliament ever summoned by his successor, Frederick William I., was the famous tobacco one, while the estates of the realm during the long reign of his son, Frederick the Great, all sat under the King's three-cornered hat.

Divine right in Prussia.

That the solid political fabric erected by the hero of the Seven Years' War came to utter and disgraceful ruin within a few short years of his death was mainly due to the fact that his successor, Frederick William II., surnamed "The Fat," was too little of a despot to support it himself, yet too much of a tyrant to permit the legislative co-operation of his people. Not content, moreover, with further enslaving his own subjects—for he had cancelled some of the liberties conferred upon them by his predecessor—this obese ruler by the grace of God interfered with armies to quench the infectious fever of popular freedom in France and Poland, and was within a very little of

The Kings of Prussia.

marching his troops into Austria with similar intent. Feeble, sensual, indolent, and dreamy, he allowed himself to become the instrument of a hated knot of worthless favourites; but though the camarilla of a military autocrat is a long way from the Constitution of a free people, it is still not altogether unlike the thin end of the wedge. His follower, Frederick William III., while free from most of his father's degrading vices, inherited to the full his notorious incapacity to rule, with the same absurd notions of divine right, and the same insuperable aversion to popular forms of government; but, while as much dependent on private counsellors, he was fortunate in being forced by circumstances, rather than impelled by his own sagacity, to adopt the services of several ministers equally renowned for their talents and their patriotism.

Even before the death of the great and popular Frederick, the Prussians had begun to manifest a growing discontent with their enthralled condition;* and early in the reign of his grand-nephew, whose evil lot fell on the cataclysmic times of Napoleon, there were signs that the patience of his much-enduring subjects could not be very much longer tried. The heroism with which, early in the century, the Prussian people finally rose in arms and expelled their French oppressors, forms the most brilliant page in all their brilliant history; but that

The Liberation War.

* "The Prussians," said Bismarck once, "shouted at the victories of Frederick the Great, but at his death they rubbed their hands with joy at seeing themselves delivered from their tyrant."—"*L'Oeuvre de M. de Bismarck*," *par M. Vilbort*, p. 213.

heroism, it is certain, was inspired as much by the ambition to get rid of their own domestic yoke as to burst the bonds of foreign sway. Bismarck once angrily protested against this view; * but though it has been given the Prince to guide the course of his country's history, none of his blindest adorers have ever yet contended that his power can avail to reverse the facts of it.

It is no part of our design to detail the vicissitudes of the Liberation War, and to trace their effect on the constitutional history of Prussia. Enough to know that —between the year 1806, when the monarchy collapsed, and 1813, when it was again triumphantly purged of its invaders—the King was constrained to issue, among other municipal and administrative reforms, his famous Emancipation Edict.† And what was its effect? On the disastrous battle-field of Jena the Prussian army had been mainly composed of indifferent and dejected serfs; at victorious Leipzig its ranks were filled with loyal and enthusiastic freemen. National calamity, strange to say, had brought personal liberty to the great mass of the Prussian people; and they now hoped that a successful effort to rid their country of an alien usurper might also win them a further measure of civil freedom. But they were disappointed. They did the heroic work demanded of them by their ruler, but received not the expected

Emancipation Edict of Frederick William III.

* See p. 54 *post.*

† Decreeing *inter alia* free exchange in land and free choice of occupation, extinction and consolidation of peasant holdings with the abolition of villeinage: justly described by Professor Seeley (in his "Life and Times of Stein") as a sort of Prussian Magna Charta.

reward. Napoleon escaped from Elba, and Europe made tremendous efforts to abolish him. Prussia, too, as before, flew to arms; and the King, well knowing how the Emancipation Edict had acted on the courage and self-sacrifice of his subjects, wisely resolved to administer to them another dose of the same miraculous medicine, or at least, as it turned out, a well-concocted counterfeit thereof.

From Vienna, therefore, whither Frederick William had repaired to take part in the re-construction of Europe, he issued an ordinance promising his people a written Constitution and a representative Assembly. Nerved by the golden prospect, the Prussian people again did warlike wonders; but, alas! on returning home from France to receive their promised Charter, they beheld its already indistinct form assuming ever smaller dimensions, till, in the process of receding from their disappointed view, it finally reached the vanishing point. The insincerity of the King, the dissensions of his ministers, and the baneful influence of counsellors like Metternich and the Czar, all did their work; and a period of shameful reaction set in, which threatened to fling back the nation into the *status quo*. We will not follow the bitter political conflict which now raged in Prussia for several years, and which provoked the Government to terrorise the party of popular freedom; suffice it to say that at last the King's promise of a representative Constitution (in May 1815) took the shape of an Edict (in June 1823) for the mere "regulation of the provincial estates," and

Delusive promise of a Prussian Constitution.

the triennial meeting of their Diets. "When it will be advisable to summon the general estates," said the faithless King, "and how they should be developed out of the provincial estates, are matters which we reserve to our paternal care, in the interests of the country, for further decision." And thus, as one historian remarks, Frederick William IV. began his public career as Crown Prince by counselling this unhappy evasion of a solemn promise.

A faithless King.

In 1840, however, when he succeeded to the Crown, it was confidently expected that he would redeem his father's honour, and vindicate his claim to be as liberal-minded a King as he was a cultivated man. Great hopes were entertained of a monarch who had talked with enthusiasm about devoting his life to the task of bestowing freedom on Prussia and unity on Germany; but the nation was bitterly disappointed. For he had not been two months on the throne when he bluntly told his subjects that he deemed a Constitution unsuited to their wants, and meant to stick to the Zemstvo-like system still in force. What was worse, there was no reasoning with a Sovereign who, as the Prince Consort of England fairly judged him, adopted mere subjective feelings and opinions as the motive principle of his actions, and was as a "reed shaken by the wind."

The truth is that Frederick William IV., an accomplished and amiable gentleman in many respects, was born to be a professor of the fine arts or a teacher of rhetoric; but it was a cruel freak of nature to make

him a King of any kind whatever. Of all modern monarchs he most resembled James I. of England; but, while not a bit less tenacious than the Stuart of the divine-right doctrine, the Hohenzollern was even much more addicted to theology and the pedantry of the schools. Strauss, the acute author of the "Life of Jesus," was one of those who satirised his crying frailties in this respect in a pamphlet entitled: "Julian the Apostate, or the Romanticist on the throne of the Cæsars." Frederick William IV. did not, it is true, like James I., tremble at the sight of a drawn sword; but he had few soldierly instincts or sympathies, and therefore the army—that mainstay of an absolute monarch—soon came to return with interest the indifference of its chief. On the other hand, the King hated his bureaucracy, that other pillar of the Prussian State, for its rationalistic bent, and was in turn scorned by it for his ardent orthodoxy. The cruel disappointment, too, of all their dearest hopes had cooled the loyalty of the great mass of the people; and it began to seem as if the only classes who remained true to Frederick William were the pietists and the papists.

Frederick William IV.

But, though a vehement stickler for religious liberty, His Majesty still continued deaf to all demands for fuller political freedom. Soon after ascending the throne he had granted an amnesty, but that was not a Charter. He had called together a mere Committee of the provincial estates to discuss trifles, but the thing wanted was a National Assembly. And he had relaxed the severity of literary censorship only to bring forth an

exasperating crop of pamphlets assailing the throne and clamouring for a Constitution. It was, however, characteristic of the King, who lived more in a mystic and mediæval dreamland than in his own realistic days, that while the intellectual leaven of his subjects was silently but surely paving the way for the catastrophe which was to bring him to his senses, he himself was expending his fine enthusiasm on the restoration of Cologne cathedral, on a mission to China, and on the creation of a Protestant bishopric at Jerusalem.

The King had visited England, and been much impressed with the parliamentary life of the nation, but he only went home with a passion for Anglicanising the Prussian Church. He had in turn been visited by Queen Victoria and her Consort, who gave His Majesty sound political advice, but he still found specious reasons for not acting on it. At last, however, it became plain, even to his prejudiced mind, that he must part with some of his absolute power if he were to retain the rest. The literature of the time was already up in arms against him, and from the operation of mind to the action of mob the transition was swift. His best friends counselled concession, and a fanatic had tried to take his life; so finally, more in reluctant compliance with the force of circumstances than with his own convictions, he issued an ordinance for combining the eight Provincial Assemblies of the Monarchy into one great United Diet.

The United Diet.

Now, a word as to the composition and functions of this embryo Parliament. It was divided into two

Chambers, or Curiae, one of the peers, and the other of the three estates. The latter was exclusively composed of representatives of the three land-possessing classes of knights, municipalities, and peasant-farmers, in aggregate number the same as in the local Diets. Now this United Diet was to be summoned as often as the wants of the State might either require fresh loans, or the introduction and increase of taxes; and without its sanction the King undertook, save in case of war and other specified exceptions, to do none of these things. Yet even these questions had to be discussed by nobles and deputies in common sitting. But with this qualified control over the mere raising of the revenue—for the manner of its application was reserved to the Crown—the real authority of the Diet ended. It was granted the empty privilege of "advising" the King as to the framing of laws affecting persons and property, and also of petitioning him on public grievances, though these complaints were only to be laid before him if supported by at least two-thirds of the votes in either Curia; nor were they to be renewed, if once rejected, except on fresh and sufficient cause shown. Such, in brief, was the nature of the quasi-representative Assembly, or baby Parliament, in which Herr von Bismarck-Schönhausen took his seat.*

Functions of the Diet.

* There were three other Bismarcks, more or less closely related, who also sat as knightly deputies in the United Diet. Among the other names, curious to note, occur a Gordon, a Douglas, and a Brown—descendants of those Scottish adventurers or exiles who sold their valour to Gustavus Adolphus and Frederick the Great, as indeed they could not have sold it to better men. That the westward "course of empire," versified by Bishop

It was opened with much pomp and circumstance on Sunday, 11th of April, 1847, in the White Saloon, or throne-room of the Old Schloss (the St. James's Palace of Berlin). The King's speech was a true reflection of his character, and must have made his hearers doubt whether they were listening to the address of a prince or the vapouring of a professor. Such a piece of confused rhetoric, not unmingled with some little show of reason, was never heard. His Majesty freely dealt in metaphors, and used adjectives with a profusion which moved the envy of sensational writers. He promised, he threatened, he cautioned, he stormed, he scolded, and abjured God by turns; with one breath declaring himself the implacable foe of absolutism, and in the next almost vowing that, as the heir of an unweakened Crown, he was firmly resolved to transmit its undiminished power to his successor. His bewildered hearers were told that he would never have called them together at all had he in the least suspected they would misunderstand their duties, or aspire to play the part of "so-called" representatives of the people; and he hinted that unless they behaved themselves properly, and with due regard for his sovereign rights, it would be long before they

Opening of the Diet.

Berkeley, has a decided tendency to ebb may be gathered from the fact that a cursory glance through *Prussian* Army Lists *alone* betrays such well-known British patronymics (most of them now prefixed by *von*) as Bentinck, Buchanan, Bruce, Campbell, Clifford, Collet, Douglas, Drummond, Ferguson, Fowler, Flottwell, Gibson, Gordon, Graham, Gregorie, Hamilton, Halkett, Jameson, Johnstone, Kennedy, Knox, Lawrence, Leslie, MacLean, Matheson, Munroy (Munroe), Ogilvie, O'Grady, Russell, Scott, Spalding, Sterling, Stoddart, Talbot, Thompson, Winsloe, Wright.

got the chance of re-assembling. He descanted on the kingly great-heartedness which had impelled him to make such large and almost unmerited concessions to the spirit of the time; and, referring to the unwritten Constitution of happy England, swore that no power on earth would ever induce him to suffer a sheet of paper to intervene between "the Lord God in Heaven and his subjects." Other countries might be so situated as to thrive under such conditions, and he could only admire and envy them for it. But not so Prussia, whose political and geographical position demanded the continuance of that strong and centralised form of government analogous to the undivided command in a besieged camp.

"Plus royaliste que le roi."

The United Diet had sat for more than a month before Herr von Bismarck opened his lips in it, and even when he did rise it was only to reprove and protest. For he was one of those who looked with disapproval on the concessions which had been wrung from the King, and he was moodily resolved to do all he could to stay the loosened stone before it began to roll with irresistible force. It was impossible, without previous parliamentary life, for party limits in Prussia to be then so sharply defined as they are now; but though names had not yet been coined, the crystallising process had begun, and Bismarck instinctively numbered himself with those who beheld in the rising tide of popular power a serious danger to the Crown. In no European country even at the present day, despite the sweeping reforms of Stein,

does the feudal feeling of personal attachment to the Sovereign survive so freshly as among the military noblesse of Prussia; and about the middle of the century it was still stronger. But among all the steadfast vassals of the King of Prussia, Herr von Bismarck was probably the staunchest. All his ancestors had been so, and it was in his very blood. When, therefore, the people, that new-born power, boldly demanded something of the King which it sorely vexed his heart to give, it was as natural for the Knight of the Mark to spring up and confront the unfamiliar monster in defence of his liege, as it would have been for him in the middle ages to assemble his retainers and help in repelling some covetous violator of the land. But he was well aware that, in defending the power of the Crown, he was also guarding the privileges of his own order; so that his attitude to the questions of the time was determined by self-interest as well as by sense of duty, the two strongest motives that can influence human action. From the very beginning, therefore, of his parliamentary life, he was the sworn King's Man, and in very truth "*plus royaliste que le roi.*" Many illustrious statesmen have commenced their career at one political pole, and ended it at the other. But Bismarck has been fairly consistent all through.

We have carefully examined the proceedings of the United Diet, and can find no instance where the appearance of Herr von Bismarck in the tribune was not the signal for excitement and uproar. "Cheers," "deep murmurs," "great tumult," "stormy interruption,"

"commotion," "sensation," "oh, oh," and "loud signs of impatience," are the only expressions used to denote the effect produced on the assembly by the knightly deputy from Jerichow; while most of the few speeches he did make during the session read very much like mere personal altercations with opponents. There was clearly more explosive force, if less parliamentary eloquence, in this man than in any of his fellow members. Indeed, his style of speaking was well described by one of his own party, who said that not only could it not even boast of bad orators, but of no orators at all. For the opening of the United Diet found its various parties as innocent of the art of words, as the breaking out of the secession struggle in America proved the combatants to be ignorant of the art of war.

Bismarck as a speaker.

We have already said that Bismarck's attitude as deputy was determined as well by self-interest as by feudal sense of duty towards his Sovereign; and it is remarkable that his first recorded vote in the Diet was influenced by the former of these motives. The King, who displayed a laudable desire to complete the land-tenure reforms of Stein, had proposed the general creation of provincial loan-institutions for facilitating the pecuniary extinction of certain burdens still attaching to peasant-holdings; and Bismarck voted with the majority *against* it, not, as he was twice careful to explain, as deeming it *ultra vires* of the Diet to guarantee the enterprise, but because he viewed in the general tenour of the bill an infringement of the

His first vote.

rights of those chiefly interested—to wit, his own propertied class.

But the boldness with which he defended the rights of his own order was nothing to the vehemence with which he struck out on behalf of the Crown. The United Diet was anything but satisfied with the small constitutional beginnings granted it by the King. One knightly member (von Saucken) deplored the want of full accord between the King and his estates, and, in the course of an eloquent appeal for heartier co-operation, drew a graphic contrast between the political and military indifference of the Prussian people in 1806, and their heroic efforts in 1813 after being inspired with the emancipating laws of the interval, when, "placing the throne upon their shoulders, they bore it on from victory to victory through streams of blood to undiscovered heights of glory."

His theory of the Liberation War.

But there was one, and only one man in the Assembly whose haughty sense of patriotism was shocked by this much-applauded picture, and that was Herr von Bismarck. Starting up, he vehemently protested against the statement, so "frequently made in connection with a demand for a Constitution, that the popular rising in 1813 was attributable to any other motive than simple shame at subjection to the foreigner." It was, in his opinion, "doing a sorry service to the national honour to suppose that the maltreatment and humiliation inflicted on the Prussians by alien masters was not in itself sufficient to make their blood boil, and

subordinate all other feelings to hatred of the intrusive stranger." During the delivery of these few sentences, which received emphasis from the scornful look and tones of the speaker, the House was thrown into a violent uproar. He was repeatedly interrupted with murmurs, groans, and hisses; but the story is that he took up a newspaper, and affected to peruse it with the most serene indifference until the clamour had abated.

It was not enough for many ardent Liberals that a general Diet of the nation had at last been summoned. They further demanded that the King should be asked to appoint them regular times of meeting, since their newly-acquired power might plainly become a mere mockery if it depended on the royal will when they should use it. All were ready to admit this; but opinion was divided as to whether it were expedient to press for a settlement of the vital question of "periodicity" so very soon. And foremost among those who earnestly begged that the King should not be pushed to the wall was Herr von Bismarck, who sneered at the "goose-quill arguments of newspaper writers," and at the "public opinion of pot-houses."

It was very difficult, he said, to ascertain real public opinion, but he thought he could detect it in some parts of the central Provinces; and it was the good old Prussian belief that the word of a King was worth more than all the twisting and turning of the letter of the law. A parallel had been drawn between the way in which the English people had secured their rights in 1688, after expelling James II., and how the Prussian nation might now assert theirs. But analogies of the

England and Prussia compared.

kind were always misleading. At that time the English were very differently situated from the Prussians now, for a century of revolution and civil war had invested them with the power of giving away their crown under conditions that were accepted by William of Orange; whereas the Prussian monarchs possessed a practically absolute crown, not by the favour of the people, but by the grace of God, and they had now voluntarily parted with some of their rights to their subjects, a spectacle rare in history.

A flood of light was thrown on Bismarck's political and religious convictions by a debate on the emancipation of the Jews. The King, who was tolerant enough as a religionist if not liberal as a ruler, humanely desired to complete the benevolent legislation of his father (who had not forgotten his Semitic subjects in the reforming period between Jena and Leipzig); and for this purpose demanded to know the opinion of the Diet on the draft of an elaborate law for equalising, with some exceptions, the rights and duties of Jews and Christians in his monarchy. One would have expected that men who talked so loudly and menacingly about political justice as due to themselves, would have also been inclined to recognise the force of their arguments with respect to others. But this was not the case. Many eloquent voices, it is true, were raised in the Assembly on behalf of the philanthropic intentions of the King; but there were still more who argued that the time had not yet come for such a sweeping social change. Foremost, too, and most emphatic among the latter was none other than Herr von Bismarck, who frankly confessed that his views were of the kind described by his opponents as "dark

Opposes the emancipation of the Jews.

and mediæval,". and that he still clung to prejudices imbibed with his mother's milk.

He was no enemy of the Jews as men; to a certain extent, indeed, he even liked them. He would even grant them every right short of holding posts of authority in a Christian State. They had been told that the idea of the Christian State was an idle fiction, a mere invention of modern philosophers, but he was of opinion that the theory was as old as the *ci-devant* Holy Roman Empire, or as the family of European nations; nay, that it was the very soil in which these had taken root, and that every State, if it were to last, or vindicate its disputed title to existence, must repose on a religious basis. For him the phrase "By God's Grace," appended to the names of Christian Sovereigns, was no mere empty sound, but an acknowledgment rather that the princes thus entrusted with God's sceptre meant to rule with it on earth in accordance with His will, as revealed in His holy gospel, and he did not see that this end could be in any way promoted by the help of the Jews. The very idea of his having to obey a Jew as representing the sacred person of His Majesty filled him with pain and abasement, nor was he ashamed to say that he shared this feeling with the lowest classes of the people. Without, however, being eligible for offices of the State, it was the prime duty of all its Hebrew subjects to lay down their lives in single-minded devotion to their adopted country; nor would the blood of Jews be shed in vain if it flowed for German freedom, even if their own emancipation were not thereby also effected.*

* Later legislation nominally conferred full civil and religious freedom on the Jews in Prussia, and throughout all Germany; but though Prince Bismarck would now doubtless shrink from avowing the views on the subject expressed by him in 1847, there is every reason to believe that the disgraceful *Judenhetze*, or Jew-baiting mania which originated at Berlin and passed over the Empire in 1880-81, was partly persisted in under the popular conviction that the Chancellor, true to the political principles of his youth, still secretly sympathised with the movement. Interpellated on the subject (November, 1880), the Prussian Government curtly replied that it had no intention of altering existing legislation as to the Jews; and in the Reichstag (2nd April, 1881), Prince Bismarck sought to repel the insinuation that he privately encouraged Anti-Semitic Societies, remarking that he had kept aloof, as enjoined by his official position, from

Frankly and fearlessly uttered, it was little wonder that these views caused a Liberal deputy to express the great interest he had felt in actually beholding the "narrow-minded, mediæval Spirit in the very flesh." But Bismarck's opinions were too deeply rooted to be easily changed. He voted against every new privilege sought for the Jews, and the very last words he uttered in the United Diet, amid "repeated interruption and signs of impatience," were that "he denied that their emancipation meant progress, as otherwise the Diet would have approved it."

Breaking up of the Diet.

After sitting squabbling for about eleven weeks the Diet was dismissed. The King, who was greatly displeased with the result of the session, paid but little heed to the "advice" of his estates, and granted few of their petitions. On the other hand many of the Liberal deputies, especially those from the Rhine, were greeted on their return home with public ovations. The constitutionalism of the King had been tried and found wanting. He had given much, but his people wanted more. The

a movement which was to him "undesirable." Despite, however, these high assurances, the Jew baiters pursued their baneful object, and (on 13th April, 1881) actually "carted" into the Radziwill Palace a voluminous petition bearing nearly a million signatures, imploring the Chancellor:—(1) to limit, at least, if not wholly hinder the further immigration of Jews into Germany: (2) to exclude them from all offices of authority, and restrict their activity in the legal career, especially on the bench; (3) to prevent their becoming teachers in Christian schools, and admit them only in very exceptional cases to others; and 4 to cause searching statistics to be drawn up as to the employment, &c., of the Hebrew population of the Empire. All the Chancellor did, however, was to acknowledge receipt of this reactionary document as if it had been a mere cask of "cloister brew," or a roll of ambrosial sausages from some of his admirers.

former was infatuated, the latter resolved. The struggle between Crown and Crowd had already begun, and such a struggle could have only one result.

Bismarck left Berlin in sorrow. He felt that a serious crisis in his country's fate had set in, and that the climax was fast approaching. But an equally important moment for himself had also arrived. For the Diet had not long been closed when he married, and, forgetting for a while his public griefs in his private happiness, he gaily started off on a wedding trip to Italy. It was here that an incident occurred which determined his future career. Like Saul, who went out to look for his father's asses and found a crown, Bismarck departed on his marriage tour and returned, so to speak, with his blank appointment as a Prussian Minister.

Bismarck on his wedding trip.

Strangely heedless of the storm that was brewing around, Frederick William IV. had no sooner piloted the ship of State, as he complacently thought, through the first threatening breakers of democratic demands than, tossing the helm to his brother the Prince of Prussia (afterwards German Kaiser), he lightly leapt ashore and made for careless Italy. At Venice the King heard of Herr von Bismarck, who "happened to be passing just then," if, indeed the patriotic subject had not carefully studied his opportunity of approaching his Sovereign for the purpose of uttering to him a kind of Lochiel warning. The mole-eyed Press had not yet discovered the man who was destined to supply it with such boundless acres of leading-article matter; but the

acute King, who had carefully read the debates in the Diet, had done so, and he was now glad of the chance of knowing more of the pugnacious knight whose behaviour in Parliament had excited his curiosity, if not, perhaps, always won his approval. Herr von Bismarck, therefore, was commanded to dine at the royal table, and invited to speak out frankly on the subject of Prussian and of German politics. The details of that conversation have not yet been divulged, but it is certain that Bismarck boldly urged those reactionary views both on the Constitutional and the Unity question which characterised all he said and wrote at this time. It delighted the Hamlet-hesitating monarch to hear his own real opinions expressed by a man to whom thought and action were equivalent terms, and he determined to keep his eye upon him. But meanwhile His Majesty continued under the influence of musty theorists like Savigny, and "masthead" counsellors like Bunsen.*

A Lochiel-like warning.

It was unfortunate, however, that even those who were entrusted with "masthead" duties in the State did not sooner discern the rocks towards which it was rapidly drifting. The internal condition of the country was growing deplorable. Political disaffection was aggravated by social distress; and a responsive sigh of relief greeted the startling news from Paris, that the

* "Lastly it has become ever clearer to me that by nature and circumstances I am so constituted as to be only then politically serviceable when, watching from the prow or top-mast, I can give timely notice of storms or rocks appearing on the horizon, but *not* if placed at the helm."—*Memoirs of Baron Bunsen. Letter to a Son*, ii. 142.

"Citizen King" had been dethroned and the Republic proclaimed. The tidings acted like tinder on almost every capital of Europe; and Berlin was instantaneously fired as if by a train of powder which, extending from the banks of the Seine to the banks of the Spree—through Cologne, Mannheim, Munich, Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, Cassel, Hanover and Dresden—had successively exploded long-stored mines in each of these cities. The King thought to quench the kindling conflagration with a paltry pail of water in the shape of a promise to confer "periodicity" on the Diet; but, alas, he was informed that a monster meeting in his capital had declared that harmony between Crown and people could only be secured by his granting constitutional privileges of a full and unconditional kind.*

Political volcanoes.

The King, however, refused to receive a deputation with these demands. The Magistrates and Town Council repaired to the Palace with a much humbler list of grievances, and were told that His Majesty was too busy to receive them. Addresses and petitions poured in from all parts of the country. Large and stormy public meetings were held; and Berlin was inundated by a republican riff-raff of Poles, Jews, political refugees, and international agitators attracted from afar, like the vultures, by the near prospect of preying on the

* Of these privileges the chief were freedom of speech, of meeting, and of the Press; an immediate amnesty of all political offenders; equal civil rights to all, irrespective of creed or class; trial by jury, and independence of the bench; diminution of the standing army; national German representation, and a speedy summoning of the United Diet.

fallen carcase of Absolutism. Public disaffection deepened to fury. On the other hand, the conciliatory mood of the Government changed to stern refusal and repression. The garrison was strengthened, adjutants and orderlies galloped madly about, and cannon were trailed menacingly through the streets. A large crowd was dispersed by cavalry, and on four successive evenings the pavements were dyed with the copious blood of the citizens.

Anarchy in Berlin.

On the 15th March oil was poured on the flickering flames of revolution by the news that it was all over with despotism in Vienna, and up once more they fiercely shot. And again the poor distracted King attempted to apply the hose by promising to summon a Congress of Princes for some vague purpose of national reform; but the arch-despot Metternich who, with an archduke, was to attend on behalf of Austria, had fled to England and left His Prussian Majesty in the lurch. The anarchy in Berlin was only a reflection of the King's mind, but while His Majesty was elaborating rhetorical addresses, the citizens were assiduously studying the art of barricades; and to his Ministers and Generals there was presented the humbling spectacle of a ruler who, while perpetually vaunting his resolve to restore unity to the German nation, lacked the necessary nerve to restore order in his own capital.

At length, on the 18th March, the crisis came. Frightened by the alarming success of the Revolution all over Europe, and by the determined attitude of his own subjects, the King at last promised the necessary

reforms. The joyful news spread like lightning, and the populace streamed to the castle to shout their gratitude. The King himself came forth to harangue (as no one could better harangue) the mob; but in the midst of their joyful excitement the populace caught sight of troops within the castle quadrangle, and clamoured for their withdrawal. Bitter experience had taught them to distrust the word of their King. But instead of *retiring*, a squadron of dragoons with a company of foot *advanced* to clear the square; and, either by accident or design, two muskets were fired into the crowd. "Treason," "Revenge," "To arms," now resounded on every side, and in a moment all was changed. More than 200 barricades, defended by infuriated burghers, rose out of the streets as if by magic, and the city was soon a wild war-scene of carnage. Morning brought physical victory to the troops, but moral conquest to the citizens, of whom a multitude had sealed their courage with their blood. The wavering King, who had repeatedly declared to imploring deputations that he would yield to reason but not to force, now at last gave way on realising the piteous calamity which had resulted from what he called a "deplorable misunderstanding;" and addressing to his "dear Berliners" another piece of that touching rhetoric whereof he had such boundless command, he withdrew the troops, dismissed his reactionary ministers, amnestied all political offenders, stood unbonneted on the balcony of his castle as the gory victims of his vacillation were borne past, with

The March Revolution.

much solemnity and circumstance, in long procession to their graves; and finally, scarved with a tri-coloured flag, rode through the street at the head of a motley crowd of princes, ministers, burgher-guards and barricade-fighters, one of the latter bearing the banner of the Reich, and another a *painted* imperial crown!

The Czar's "poet-brother."

It was little wonder that, on hearing of this circus-like procession, the Emperor Nicholas, who used to refer to the King of Prussia as his *frère-poète*, exclaimed: "*Maintenant nous n'avons pas besoin de Légéard*" (a favourite 'art-rider' of his Majesty), *je ferai venir Monsieur mon beau-frère.*" But we will not further follow the stirring and complicated events of this revolutionary time, which began with a tragedy and ended with a farce. It is enough for our purpose to record, as the main immediate result of the whole, that the King at last promised his people a written Constitution, and that the United Diet was again convoked to pave the way for a Constituent Assembly.

On returning in the late autumn of 1847 from his wedding tour to Italy, Bismarck had settled at Schönhausen, the ancient seat of his race. Here, engrossed with his newly found happiness, and devoted to country pursuits, he passed the winter in private seclusion; but he was roused out of his domestic reverie by the startling events of the spring. The days of March affected him less with surprise than with sorrow, and he had his own theory of their cause. "The true motive power in the history of these days," he said, "was a mere lust of theft"; and all large cities, as being the hotbeds of

covetous passions and of revolution, ought, he thought, "to be swept from the earth"—an opinion which procured him the sobriquet of the *Stadt-vertilger*, or "Town-Destroyer." To Bismarck the spirit of revolution was nothing but the spirit of robbery. "I do not think," he said, "that these evils can be remedied by democratic concessions, or by projects for a united Germany. The disease lies deeper, and I dispute that there has ever existed in the Prussian people any need for a national regeneration on the pattern of the Frankfort theories."*

Bismarck's theory of the Revolution.

In his retirement at Schönhausen, as we have said, Bismarck looked upon the Revolution with wrath, and upon the inaction of the Crown with scorn; but what moved his anger when merely told of it in the country infuriated him when, in obedience to the King's writ, he came to town and beheld the state of things with his own eyes. For a man who spoke of the "people" as an intangible body which possessed not the legal

Sovereignty of the people.

* It is interesting to compare these opinions with what he said about the same time of similar movements in neighbouring countries. "The English Revolution," he remarked, "aimed at freedom; the French at equality. Even now any English proletary on the street struck the foreigner as being imbued with the feeling of a manly independence, while quite ready to recognise the higher social position of a gentleman; but a Paris workman, on the other hand, would probably answer the questioning stranger with brutal incivility if better dressed than himself. English freedom was characterised by the manly self-consciousness which was proud enough of its own worth to be able to endure social superiority; but French Equality was the chimerical Daughter of Envy and Avarice, whom this richly-gifted nation had been chasing for sixty years of blood and brainlessness (*Blut und Aberwitz*) without ever so much as laying its hand upon her."

qualities of an individual, and had no rights as opposed to those of the Crown, it was intensely painful to see "national property" inscribed on the palace of the Prince of Prussia, whose attitude to the Revolution had been so construed by an infuriated populace as to cause his Highness to withdraw for a while to England. A lodge of freemasons had even thrown out of the window the portrait of the future German Emperor.* Seditious placards arrested Bismarck's eye at every street corner. Amnestied Poles, Jews, and other rapacious gaol-birds, ranted about popular freedom on every platform, and the whole city fluttered with Polish and tricolour flags. All this was humiliating enough to a Prussian patriot of the stamp of Bismarck, but it was agony to his soul to see the matchless troops of his Sovereign replaced by slovenly-accoutred citizens, who mounted guard with an aggravating air of "monarch of all I survey." The people had already asserted their sovereignty.

The second United Diet.

But, firmly determined that he, at least, would do all in his power to shake it, Bismarck resumed his seat in the United Diet (convoked to pave the way for a Constituent Assembly), which had only four sittings (April 2–10). The Diet hastened to vote an address of confidence in the King for all he had done, and all he had promised to do, but Bismarck stood almost alone in opposing it.

The past, he said, was buried, and to him it "was matter for more painful regret than to many of them that no human power was able to recall it after the Crown itself had sprinkled ashes on its

* Memoirs of Herr Wagener, Editor of the *Kreuz Zeitung*, p. 50.

tomb." But though thus compelled to accept the address—for the simple reason that he was powerless to do otherwise—he could not retire from the Diet with the lie in his mouth that he rejoiced and was grateful for what, to say the least of it, he regarded as the path of error. If success were really to attend this new endeavour to achieve a happier state of things (in Prussia), as well as a united German Fatherland, there would be time enough for him to thank the author of all this. But, meanwhile, it was impossible for him to do so.

The Diet concerned itself with measures for the election of the necessary Prussian deputies to the proposed German Unity-Parliament at Frankfort, but on this subject Bismarck was scornfully silent. It is interesting, however, to note, as already indicating the favourite habit of his mind, that while others were engrossed with the domestic state of the country, he alone rose to press the Government for information as to its foreign affairs, and to dilate on the "apprehension with which he and his friends gazed after the Phaëthon flight of Prussian policy" in Schleswig-Holstein. It was from similar apprehensions, too, that he essayed to bring the Government to book for its pusillanimous policy in Polish Posen. The fire of revolution had been quick to spread to this inflammable province, where the disaffected population under Mieroslavski were committing all kinds of sanguinary excesses in the desperate hope of achieving their separation from Prussia. Now, the King, among the other assurances with which he responded to the various demands of his revolutionary subjects, had promised the Poles of Posen a national

Prussia's foreign policy.

reorganisation, or qualified home-rule, while sending troops among them to restore order. But it was characteristic of Herr von Bismarck that, while heartily approving the latter measure, he was by no means enamoured of the former.

He was firmly convinced, he said, that the reorganisation of the Polish nationality presented them with the prospect of two alternatives, both equally sad for Prussia! The first of these was the restoration of a Polish kingdom within the limits of that of 1772; and the second was——

what we unfortunately cannot record, for at this point the voice of the speaker was drowned in the impatient murmurs of the Diet, by which he was regarded as the angry and unreasoning spirit of protest and denial.

Denial and protest on every point. He even inveighed against the Government for offering to remit part of the flour-tax, denouncing this as a mere *captatio benevolentiae*, or unworthy means of purchasing peace and order in the larger towns; while in the country he and his friends, he said, were ready to achieve the same end, if need be, sword in hand. Nor would he agree to grant extraordinary supplies for the military protection of the monarchy, as well as for the restoration of its trade and credit. Whatever was required for the army he would vote for, but the industry of the nation required no artificial stimulants. Nevertheless the Government got all it wanted, and the United Diet was dissolved after having, in its four sittings, remitted part of the flour-tax, voted the Crown forty million thalers, settled the basis of the

The "Jena of the Prussian nobility."

promised Constitution, and passed an electoral law for the return of the National Assembly which should more precisely shape it. On a subsequent occasion Bismarck sorrowfully referred to the second United Diet as the "Jena of the Prussian nobility."

In the Constituent Assembly, which now met at Berlin (in one of the royal theatres) to devise a Constitution for the Prussian nation, Bismarck scorned to sit, and it was perhaps fortunate that he did so; for, with the superaddition of so much combativeness as lay in him, an Assembly which constantly exhibited scenes that vied with the tumult of a bear-garden, might have been tempted to come to actual blows. For six long months (22nd May—5th December) it sat squabbling and fighting. Nothing would content it. The King's very reasonable concessions were but as a drop in the ocean of its demands. Ministry succeeded ministry—each more liberal and conciliatory than the other, but still the Assembly was not satisfied, and it began to behave as if it had been the Legislative Body begotten of the French Revolution. Mob-rule again reigned supreme in Berlin, and at last resulted in such excesses that the King decreed the removal of the Assembly to Brandenburg, the better to place it beyond the reach of democratic terrorism. But the deputies denied his Majesty's right to do so, and would not budge till they were finally compelled by the bayonets of "Papa Wrangel." Nor was it to any purpose that the Rump Assembly afterwards met and declared it legal for the country, in the circumstances,

The Constituent Assembly.

to refuse payment of taxes. Very few had the courage to imitate, on slim authority of this kind, the conduct of Pym and Hampden, and all resistance evaporated in empty talk. But though driven from Berlin, a working majority of the Assembly could not be got together in Brandenburg, so the King at last mustered up courage to dissolve it altogether. At the same time he issued on his own authority a very liberal Constitution (identical almost with that of Belgium), of which the revision was reserved to the bicameral Parliament (the first of its kind in Prussia) summoned for the following February (1849), on the principle, as before, of universal suffrage.

These stormy six months had been a period of great anxiety to Bismarck, who passed his time alternately at Berlin and in the country. It was painful to him to see his beloved Prussia thus sucked into the whirling torrent of the time, with Democracy at the prow and Helplessness at the helm; and as the news of each successive outburst of riot and rapine reached him from the capital, it was incomprehensible to him why the King did not immediately clear the streets with one effective whiff of grape-shot. When the Revolution broke out, he had counselled a remedy of this kind.

Why not a whiff of grape-shot?

"After the days of March," he once said, "I remember that the troops were in Potsdam and the King in Berlin. When I went out to Potsdam a great discussion was going on as to what was to be done. General Möllendorff, who was there, sat on a stool not far from me, looking very sour. They had peppered him so that he could only sit half on. One was advising this and another that, but

nobody very well knew what to do. I sat near the piano, saying nothing, but I struck up a couple of notes, 'Dideldum Dittera' (here he hummed the beginning of the infantry double-quick step). The old fellow got up from his stool at once, his face beaming with delight, embraced me, and said, 'That's the right thing!—I know what you mean—march on Berlin.' As things fell out, however, nothing came of it." *

But, though scorning to sit in an Assembly of democrats, Herr von Bismarck, like the courageous Dyke-Captain that he was, did all he could in a private way to counteract and dam the roaring flood of revolution. A well-defined, cohesive Conservative party was not yet in existence, but he helped to form one; and he was one of the chief contributors to its newly-founded organ, the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, of which, as its prospectus ran, the chief aim was "to oppose with force and emphasis the unchained demons of revolt, and to devote especial attention to the internal development of Prussia and Germany." We have it on the authority of the first editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung* himself,† that "scarcely

Opposing the Revolution.

* "Bismarck in the Franco-German War."

† "*Meine Memoiren aus der zeit von* 1848 *bis* 1866, *&c.*," *von Hermann Wagener* (*Berlin*, 1884). It has been frequently stated that Bismarck was one of the founders of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, but *that* he was not. His name is not on the list of original shareholders, nor had he a hand in devising the journal, but he was a constant contributor to it, and received payment for his articles. "I knew," writes Herr von Unruh (President of the Constituent Assembly), "that Bismarck was closely connected with the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, and once asked him how he could allow this print to teem, as it did, with calumnies and lies, not even sparing honest women. Bismarck replied that he also was averse to that kind of thing, but he was told that in such a struggle it could not be otherwise; and my remark that such weapons sullied those who used them had no effect. I might have then concluded from the incident, what subsequently became quite evident, that

a number appeared during the sittings of Parliament which did not contain a shorter or longer article from the pen of Herr von Bismarck," and that "in everything relating to the Chambers he was our best contributor." He also took a prominent part in organising some of the political clubs which then started into life. But he was no spouter, and mere debating had much less attraction for him than the task of drilling the awkward rustics on his own estates for all emergencies. In Pomerania he was especially active in fostering the inevitable spirit of reaction which had already begun to show itself; and when, on his return from England, the Prince of Prussia visited that ancient province, Bismarck was one of the chief authors of the loyal reception which cheered the heart of the future German Emperor.

Bismarck as a journalist.

He was repeatedly summoned to confer with the King at Sans Souci, and on one of these occasions there took place a conversation which had a marked influence on his future career. The King asked him whether he approved his constitutional policy, to which Bismarck boldly replied that he could not say he did. "Then you are not prepared to bear me out in all my liberal reforms?" "Well, to be consistent, no, your Majesty!" "What? Not even as a sworn vassal of the Crown?" Bismarck paused, reflected, and changed countenance.

A political conversion.

Bismarck was not very scrupulous in the choice of means to achieve a definite end!"—"*Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*," in the "*Deutsche Revue*," for October, 1881.

The King had touched his most sensitive chord. Yes, he would stand by his Majesty to the very last, even in the rash and hopeless adventure on which he had embarked.* And from that day forth Herr von Bismarck became the King's Man for good and for ill, though less from conviction than for conscience sake. He had at last reluctantly accepted the Constitution; yet not so much that part of it which granted rights to the people as that which recited the privileges of the Crown, and the latter he now resolved to defend from further curtailment with all his might. But for that purpose it was necessary to have a seat in the Chamber. So he went and got elected (for West Havelland) to the first Prussian Parliament, which had been summoned to revise and sanction the liberal Constitution granted by the Crown (26th February—27th April, 1849).

In addressing his constituents Bismarck had declared that "every true patriot must support the Government in its new (liberal) policy, in order to combat the Revolution which threatened them all. He himself was firmly resolved to make the cause of their Fatherland his own, with all his strength and soul, and his first endeavour would be to re-knit the loosened bonds of trust between Crown and people." But of this fair promise the first earnest on the part of its maker was an effort to retain the people in the arbitrary power of the Crown.

Promise and performance.

* The above story of this conversion to constitutionalism was related by Bismarck himself at one of his familiar *soirées* in the spring of 1881.

Before discussing the draft Constitution, the Chamber naturally enough wished to get rid of the state of siege under which the capital had been placed by "Papa Wrangel" after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly; but by Bismarck this proposal was angrily opposed.

The arguments against the state of siege, he said, had merely been supported by logic more imposing by its length than by its edge, and by the usual rhetorical talk about cannon, bayonets, General Brennus and Junker-Parliaments. But it was of much less importance that the Berliners should not be prevented from reading their newspapers and attending their clubs than that the representatives of the whole people, who were assembled to deliberate on the destinies of the country, should be secured from insult and intimidation such as had soiled the page of Prussian history during the sitting of the Constituent Assembly. As for the vaunted will of the people, that was a most slippery and intangible thing, not always manifested by majorities. No expression had lately been so much misused as the word "People." Everybody had taken it to mean exactly what served his own turn; generally a mass of individuals whom he had succeeded in gaining over to his views.*

No less hostile was Bismarck to the proposal to move the Crown for an amnesty of all political offences committed since the tragic 18th of March.

The essence of the royal right of pardon, he argued, consisted in its free and voluntary exercise; and its too indiscriminate use only

* As a proof that the spirit of revolution was still by no means dead, Bismarck quoted some lines from a German "Marseillaise" which had been sung by certain deputies on the festival anniversary of the 18th March:

"*Wir färben echt,*
Wir färben gut,
Wir färben mit Tyrannenblut."

With whose blood, then, could they tell him, did they mean to dye their banner? and the question created a vehement uproar.

had the effect of blunting the popular sense of law and justice. During the March days, he said, the King had pardoned mere "rebels!" "Rebels, rebels?" resounded on the indignant Left. "Yes, gentlemen, rebels," continued Bismarck, emphasising the last word with angry tone and gesture, so that there could be no doubt about his meaning. The Royal Right of Pardon. No mediation, he said, was possible in the struggle which had shaken Europe to its root. One party based its right nominally on the will of the people, but in reality on brute force and barricades; while the other was founded on authority established by God, and maintained by God's grace. To one of those parties agitators of every kind were heroic champions of truth, freedom, and right; to the other they were rebels. No parliamentary debates or majorities could ever mediate between them, but sooner or later the God of battles would have to throw the iron dice and decide the matter; and thus the blubbering sentimentality of the nineteenth century, which beheld a martyr in every fanatical rebel, and every hireling barricade-fighter, would, in the end, occasion more bloodshed than a stern and resolute justice practised from the beginning.

This was court-martial rigour with a vengeance, but it was only of a piece with his suggestion about this time that "half a dozen drummers should be placed on the ministerial bench, and that all interpellations should be answered with a roll of their drums!" * Anecdotes. "A Chamber," he said, "can be much easier mobilised than an army." One Liberal nobleman—Count Schwerin—who acted as President of the Chamber, asked Bismarck what he had against him. "That you were not shot at the battle of Prague" (like the great Frederick's General of the same name), was the curt reply.†

Another Liberal deputy who, piqued by the words of

* *Meine Memoiren, &c., von Hermann Wagener* (ex-editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*).

† Ibid.

Bismarck while admiring his courtesy in combat, offered, on behalf of the Left, to spare his life when they got the upper-hand, provided he too would name any Liberal he would do the like by if he in his turn came to power. But the conditions, as being unequal, did not satisfy Bismarck, since there was no chance, he thought, of the Left ever achieving leadership, and since, even if they did, life would become so intolerable that it would not be worth living. "No, no," replied Bismarck, "courteous to the last rung of the ladder, but hang all the same." *

In the second Prussian Parliament (7th August, 1849—26th February, 1850) to which Bismarck was also re-elected—but not without being stormed at, and even stoned by the mob—the revision of the Constitution was continued under the same running fire of criticism from the man who had promised to do all he could to "re-knit the loosened bonds of trust between Crown and people." But nothing provoked his opposition so much as the attempt of the Chamber to erase from the Charter the provision that "existing taxes and imposts will continue to be raised." For to the mind of Bismarck this was a clear attempt to invest Parliament with the power, not merely of regulating the employment of, but of altogether refusing supplies, and thus of rendering its will paramount.

Comparative constitutionalism.

He predicted the endless conflicts that would inevitably arise from such an innovation, and ridiculed the argument that it was the

* Wagener.

natural consequence of a constitutional system; the main point for consideration, he argued, being whether it would prove beneficial or baneful to Prussia, which, with its peculiar character, was not to be compared with other countries where the word "constitution" was very variously understood. The constitutional dynasties of England, France, and Belgium, had received their crowns "like a gift horse from the gory hands of the Revolution," with all the conditions annexed, and the decline of every German State kept pace with the concessions wrung from it in this respect. But Prussia, despite her voluntary concessions to the people, was still the strong and independent kingdom she had been for centuries, and still inherited enough of her old institutions to enable her to save from destruction States like Saxony and Baden, where disorder, resulting from the worship of French constitutionalism, had been greatest. Nothing in the state of things across the Rhine encouraged him to don the Nessus-robe of French political teachers. As for Belgium, its constitution was only eighteen years old, "a highly attractive age for ladies, but not for laws, and no one would think of attaching much weight to the experience of a girl of eighteen even if she had been wily or wise enough to repel the wooings of a *mauvais sujet.*" England, it was true, ruled herself, although the Lower House had the right of refusing taxes; but these references to England were their bane. "Give us everything English which we do not have: English piety, English respect for the law; give us the entire English Constitution, but with it at the same time all the conditions of English landlordism, English wealth and common sense, and especially an English Lower House; in brief, all we do not possess, and then I will also say, 'You can rule us in the English way.' But even then I would not deem it incumbent on the Prussian Crown to let itself be forced into the powerless position of the English one, which looks more like an ornamental cupola of the State edifice, while in ours I recognise the central and supporting column. And let us not forget that England, after settling the elements of her Constitution in 1688, lived for a century under the tutelage of an omnipotent aristocracy of a few families. During that period the country got accustomed to the new reforms, and it was only at the end of the last century that an active parliamentary life began in England; but the English reforms, which partly broke the power of the aristocracy, and partly seemed

to do so, are younger than the Belgian Constitution; and it yet remains to be seen whether these English reforms will last for centuries, like the previous power of the aristocracy. It may be true that if we wish to swim we must go into the water; but I cannot see, all the same, why any one who wants to learn swimming should jump into the water precisely where it is deepest, simply because a practised swimmer can move about there in safety. We lack the whole class which in England devotes itself to politics, the class of wealthy, and therefore Conservative gentlemen, independent of material interests, whose whole education is directed with a view to their becoming statesmen, and whose only aim in life is to take part in public affairs."

The danger of majorities.

Without such an element in the country, Bismarck thought it highly dangerous to entrust mere "lottery-drawn majorities" with the decision of weighty questions of policy, and especially with the purse-strings of the State. But, indeed, faulty to him seemed every system of taxation which would confer on the people the power of exercising pressure on the Crown, of forcing ministers on the King against his will, of influencing his foreign policy (he was always harping on this chord), the management of which was his special prerogative, and even of interfering unduly with home affairs.

Such power (he argued) might very well be claimed by a Parliament containing two sharply-defined parties, whereof one formed a sure and unwavering majority which subjected itself with iron discipline to its ministerial leaders; but it was certainly not the function of a body like the Prussian Assembly, wherein votes were the varying result of a very complicated "diagonal of forces" of from five to six parties, not one of which was closely related to the Cabinet, and whose activity, therefore, must be essentially negative. All this, too, he further contended, was aggravated by the fact that even such an Assembly by no means truly represented the mass of the

Prussian people, its character in this respect, for one thing, being destroyed by the predominance in it of the worst kind of absolutism in the shape of "privy-councillor omnipotence, with over-weening professor-wisdom and red-tapism, which is the necessary product, I venture to assert, of that Prussian method of education that robs the individual experimented on of belief in all authority in this world or the next, and leaves him only faith in his own wisdom and infallibility."

In thus arguing against what he held to be parliamentary encroachment on the prerogative of the Crown, Bismarck was influenced by the serious belief that the King could do no wrong, or would not, at least, do so. The fate of the country, in his opinion, would be much safer in the hands of a wise despotism than of a foolish democracy. To him the ballot-box was only a dice-box. The quadrature of the circle, he said, was no less hopeless a task than the attempt to procure a representation of all the country's interests, "not merely with the accuracy of a daguerreotype, but even with the faithfulness of a hasty sketch."

The ballot-box a dice-box.

These views he had expressed during the debate on the composition of the Upper Chamber, which he strongly urged should be mainly filled with a hereditary peerage, instead of by the elected representatives of an exclusive class of landed proprietors, as being the "best means of safely steering the Prussian Constitution between the Scylla of a benevolent sabre-*régime*, and the Charybdis of Jacobin sway." A chamber of hereditary Prussian peers, he said, "would give the ship of

An hereditary Chamber.

State the necessary ballast, moderating as if by helm and keel the motive power of the sails when bellied by the breeze of the ('*Zeitgeist*,' or forward) spirit of the time."

Of a piece with his glowing eulogy of the Prussian nobility was his panegyric of Prussian officers, to whose virtues, he argued, it was mainly due that the country had been preserved from utter anarchy and ruin by the Revolution. "As a body," he said, "they were the envy of all war-waging peoples, and could alone at the head of a reformed and augmented army form the basis of a bold and glorious policy for Prussia." Nothing, perhaps, is more remarkable in the career of the Unifier of Germany than the fact that it was he who first called serious attention to the state of the tool with which he was to do his work. By a rigid system of economy the finances of Prussia had been greatly improved, but they had only been bettered at the expense of her defensive power. That the army was not, in the eyes of patriots like Bismarck, what it should have been, was proved by the fact that Frederick William hesitated to make it the instrument of German unity, and that instead of going to war with Austria he went to Olmütz.* When, therefore, in the spring sessions of 1850 and 1851, the Chamber showed signs of a desire to indulge in further military retrenchment, Bismarck compared its conduct with the "ignorant niggardliness of Joseph Hume," and pleaded hard for observance of the "maxim of Montecuccoli, that war

The Prussian Army.

* See further on.

requires: 1, money; 2, money; and 3, much more money than there is in this budget."

He had previously referred to the army as "Prussia's life-nerve," and he believed, with Frederick the Great, that the sky did not repose more firmly on the shoulders of Atlas than the Prussian State on its Generals. He was Prussian to the backbone. "I never was ashamed," he once said, during the debates on the revision of the Constitution, "of being a Prussian; and in particular, on returning home from foreign countries I have always felt right proud of being one." It was this intense spirit of Chauvinism which, during the debate on the question of civil marriage, made him protest against the attempt to "experiment on the Fatherland with such French charlatanry."

Prussian to the backbone.

Europe, he said, had previously held the Prussians to be a nation of thinkers; but their "popular representatives" during the last two years had deprived them of this good name, as having proved themselves to be mere translators of French "wrapping-paper theories." He exhorted them to cling to the Christian traditions of their forefathers, and if they did so, and guaranteed the free exercise of every "Cultus" to the extent even of giving police-protection to those democratic visionaries who had lately compared one of their martyrs (Robert Blum, shot at Vienna) to the Saviour of the world, he hoped still to "see the 'Ship of Fools' of the time split on the rock of the Christian Church, for faith in the revealed word of God was more firmly rooted in the people than belief in the beatific power of any article in the Constitution."

The last words uttered by Bismarck as a deputy in the Prussian Chamber were ominous. A discussion had arisen as to whether one honourable member, who had written a pamphlet with the alleged object of

seditiously stirring up the citizens and peasantry (*Bürger und Bauern*) against *Junkerthum*, could be proceeded against during the session; and Dr. Simpson, of Königsberg, remarked that no one in Prussia would be inclined to think of himself as coming within the category of this obnoxious tribe. But to this Bismarck emphatically demurred. He claimed for himself and his political friends the right to feel designated by this expression, in the same way as a dutiful officer would think himself honoured on hearing democrats talk of mercenaries. "'Whigs' and 'Tories,'" he said, "were also epithets which had originally a contemptuous meaning, and be assured that we too, on our side, will yet bring the name of *Junker* into respect and honour."*

Proud of being a "Junker."

* Here it may be as well to explain a term which will frequently occur in the course of our narrative. A "*Junker* (*Jung Herr*), or younker," says Herr Bamberger, "is essentially the scion of a noble house which has devoted itself to military service—a mixture of Charles I. cavalier, Prussian lieutenant, German feudal lord, and Spanish Don Quixote." In Prussia the term was originally applied to cadets of the noblesse, and to young country gentlemen who acted as ensigns, and did other squirely duties; while *Junkerthum*, or Junkerism, gradually came to denote the social qualities which distinguished this class—family pride (probably deepened by poverty), reactionary Conservatism, and arrogant caste demeanour. In 1848 the word was applied by the Liberals in a practical sense to the high Prussian or Conservative party—mainly composed of the reactionary landed gentry, who loathed the very name of reform. Mommsen, in his "History of Rome," speaks of "narrow-mindedness and short-sightedness as the real and inalienable privileges of all genuine *Junkerthum*." When the National Assembly, in 1848, was busy with its root-and-branch schemes of reform, a large number of titled gentlemen met in Berlin to devise means of guarding their ancient rights, and their Convention was dubbed the "Junker Parliament."

CHAPTER III.

PARLIAMENTARY CAREER (*continued*).

2.—*The German Question.*

We have now said enough to characterise Bismarck's attitude to the various constitutional questions which agitated his native Prussia, and which found their ultimate solution, in spite of his determined opposition on many points, in the Charter of 31st January, 1850.* It now behoves us to trace, as rapidly as may be consistent with clearness, the course of his thought and action during these same years with respect to the larger problem of German Unity, which had always a greater fascination for him, and must therefore have a deeper interest for us.

A deputation from Frankfort.

It was on the 3rd of April, 1849, when the first Prussian Parliament was deep in its constitutional debates, that a deputation of political notables from Frankfort waited on the King of Prussia, and offered him the Imperial German Crown. But who were they who thus presumed to do so big a thing, and of what movement were they the outcome? To explain this we must beg the patience of our readers while we diverge

* See Appendix.

once more from the biographical to the historical line of our narrative.

Liberty and unity, constitutionalism and federalism —such were the blessings longed for by the German people during the first half of the century. In the former respect something was accomplished, especially in the South German States, even in the first decade after the Liberation War; but it was not till 1830, when the July Revolution successfully aroused anew the dormant energies of the nation, that it seriously began to think of political cohesion. What their Princes could not, or would not, do for them, the people now seriously set about trying to accomplish themselves. But their efforts were at first small, isolated, and ill-directed. Rash and ill-advised like youth, the movement had even manifested itself in a miserable show of force against the Diet. In the troubled reactionary period which followed, the crumpled bud of nationality, so to speak, lay prostrate under snow, and it was saved from premature death only by the furtive gardening care of patriotic deputies in the various Chambers recently created throughout Germany, which acted like so many arks of free-speech in a deluge of despotism.

Germany's struggles for political cohesion.

In the year 1848 the electric shock of revolution again thrilled the nation to its core, and the cry for a German Parliament rang through the land. On the invitation of the Badeners a congress of deputies from various States met at Heidelberg; another preliminary meeting — much

The Revolution of 1848.

more largely attended—was soon thereafter held at Frankfort, to concert details; frightened by the Revolution which was knocking so loudly at their various palace-gates, the Sovereigns affected to countenance all these popular endeavours; the semblance of co-operation between the Diet and the Democracy was established; and at last, on the 18th of May, 1848, the first German Parliament, elected by universal suffrage in proportion to the population of the various States, met in the Church of St. Paul, at Frankfort-on-the-Main, the ancient electoral and coronation city of the German Emperors.

A German Parliament.

Born of revolution and nourished on the blind rage for reform, it shot like a meteor across the political sky, only to make the succeeding darkness all the more painfully felt. Its composition was peculiar. The elections to it had been held almost simultaneously with those for the Prussian Constituent Assembly; and the broad consequence was that, in Prussia at least, nearly all the practical wisdom was sent to Berlin, and all the political folly to Frankfort. To the ordinary Prussian it was clear enough what was at stake on the banks of the Spree, but not, on the other hand, what was afoot on the banks of the Main; so in the former case, as a rule, he voted for men who could drive a simple bargain, and in the other for men who could write a difficult book. The electors in the other States being guided by pretty much the same principle, it ensued that the German Parliament mainly consisted of professional scholars, liberal visionaries,

philosophic radicals, and men who could see little difference between the method of treating a political theory and a problem in mathematics. Dahlmann, Droysen, Duncker, Von Raumer, and Gervinus, the historians; Welcker, the publicist; Arndt and Uhland, the poets; Jacob Grimm, the philologist; and Simson, the jurist—are but a few specimens of the men who took the lead in the Frankfort Assembly. Had the practical sense of these politicians been equal to their patriotism, their deliberations might have borne very different fruit.

The first important act of the Frankfort Parliament was to appoint a provisional *Reichsverweser*, or Deputy Ruler of the Empire, in the person of John of Austria, into whose executive hands the Diet then committed its trust; and thus a corpse was supplanted by a ghost, which not even an Imperial ministry could endow with the show of substance. Then followed weary months of wrangling and bargaining, of arid debates on the fundamental rights of the people, and bitter controversies between the "Grand Germans," or those who were for including Austria in the glorious new Confederation, and the "Petty Germans" who urged that she should be kept out of it. Forgetful, too, of the King of Prussia's reminder that "there were still Princes in Germany, and he was one of them," the Assembly began to act as if the popular sovereignty it asserted was already a grave reality and not a mere theory. It meddled with things with which it had not the remotest business, and drew upon itself the fury of an anarchic populace.

"Grand Germans" and "Petty Germans."

Barricades were thrown up; artillery played upon the mob; and two members of the Assembly—Prince Lichnovsky and General Auerswald—were brutally massacred.

But the inevitable reaction was not long in setting in, and the re-establishment of authority at Vienna and Berlin relieved the hearts of all German Sovereigns from the revolutionary pressure under which they had at first frankly recognised the Constituent Assembly, and transferred to it the powers of the Diet. Concession based on fear soon gave way to refusal arising from contempt. The Prince Consort of England wrote to the Kings of Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, and Würtemberg, urging them and their fellow-Sovereigns to meet at Frankfort and settle all constitutional questions in concert with the Assembly, but his advice was discarded. They scornfully held aloof. Nevertheless the Assembly went on debating all the same, and by the end of the year it had elaborated a document that was less a Constitution than an illuminated manuscript, which each party had adroitly contrived to adorn with its own political whims—a "transcript of the parchment of Magna Charta on continental blotting-paper." But the Constitution was, after all, not so much the apple of discord as the question of its executive chief; and on this head the conflict of opinion was dreadful. The people, in this respect, were slightly more patriotic than the Princes, but neither was sufficiently unselfish to subordinate its own particular interests to the general

A Magna Charta on blotting paper.

weal. The Hapsburgers thought it beneath their dignity to submit themselves to the Hohenzollerns; while, in the supremacy of a Protestant State like Prussia, the Ultramontanes beheld the reign of Anti-Christ. To the Guelphs and the Wittelsbachs it was equally intolerable to be overshadowed by a dynasty which was only in its cradle when they were bearded men.

The problem was greatly simplified by the news of the Constitution granted by the Vienna Cabinet (4th March, 1849), which declared all the polyethnic territories of Austria to be one and indivisible without saying a word about the position she had hitherto held in the German family of States. Now there were few men, however ardent their desire for unity, who relished the prospect of the national mantle being rounded off by a motley patch of Hungarian, Czech, and Croatian work, and the devotion of the "Grand Germans" was further shaken by the conviction that Austria clearly wished to resuscitate the Diet, with all its vile abuses. A reorganisation of parties was the immediate result; and after about three weeks of dexterous marching and countermarching under the leadership of Heinrich von Gagern, the Assembly elected Frederick William IV. of Prussia to the hereditary dignity of Emperor of the Germans. The bells of Frankfort rang out the joyful tidings that a nation had at last been born, and away to Berlin sped a deputation—which included Arndt, Dahlmann, and Von Raumer—to deposit the Imperial crown at the foot of the Prussian throne.

An Emperor of Germany elect.

But the hopeful joy with which they approached the presence of Frederick William was quickly turned into despairing sorrow. For thrice they offered him the Kaiser's crown, which he did thrice refuse. In the decision of the National Assembly His Majesty recognised the voice of the people, but not that of his fellow Princes; and without their concurrent assent, he said, he could not take a step which so materially affected their interests as well as his own. Bitter was the disappointment caused by this reply from a Sovereign who had so frequently boasted his resolve to place himself at the head of a united Germany. To the poet Arndt, who had conjured the King in the manner of an ancient prophet to bow to the will of the people and save the nation, His Majesty described the proffered crown as "the iron fetter by which the descendant of four-and-twenty Sovereigns, the ruler of sixteen million subjects, and the lord of the loyalest and bravest army in the world, would be made the mere serf of the Revolution." There is no doubt that, in refusing the Imperial crown, the King was influenced by prudence; but it is equally certain that he was also moved by fear. The news of the Frankfort vote reached him on the same day as brought tidings of the battle of Novara; and he felt that, dangerous as it was to spite Austria at any time, it would be doubly so to brave her in her hour of victory—Austria, who could count on the support of Russia, and who had withdrawn her representatives from the National Assembly on hearing of the *Kaiserwahl*, while encouraging the German

Frederick William IV. refuses the Imperial Crown.

Kings to do the same. There were not wanting patriots who exhorted the King to discard these considerations and "descend into the lion's den, in the courageous confidence that God would help him;" but to these counsellors His Majesty's only replied that "he was not the prophet Daniel, and that he did not see the use of tempting Providence."

"Never, never, never!"

Still, the King's refusal of the Imperial crown was only conditional, and though resolved not to accept it at the hands of the people alone, he at once set about seeing whether it were not possible to achieve the assent of the crowned heads and free cities of Germany. On the same day, therefore, on which he sent the Frankfort deputation empty and dispirited away, Prussia invited the German Governments to send plenipotentiaries with all haste to Frankfort for the purpose of discussing the formation of a Federal State, and of shaping their attitude to the National Assembly. A favourable reply was received from eight-and-twenty of the minor States, but the others were silent. Meanwhile, the Liberals in the Prussian Chamber disapproved the step, as calculated to dash the hopes of Germany, and demanded recognition of the Frankfort Constitution, on the strength of which, as well as on subsequent approval by the German Sovereigns, they moved the King to accept the proffered crown. To these demands, however, Count Bradenburg, one of the ministers, simply answered with a dramatic "Never, never, never!"; while Herr von Bismarck, as spokesman of the extreme Right, rose to move the order of the day.

His speech was long and telling, being characterised by satirical humour and pitiless logic, and by explosive elements which repeatedly brought into requisition the bell of the President. Comparing the Prussian Charter with the Frankfort Constitution, and dwelling on the impossibility of their co-existence, he described the latter as having been drawn from "the profounder depths of the wisdom-well of those doctrinaires who, since the *Contrat-social*, had learned nothing and forgotten much; of those theorists whose fancies had cost the nation more blood, money, and tears, in six months, than the absolutism of three-and-thirty years."

Bismarck on the Frankfort Constitution.

The Frankfort Constitution, he said, bore upon its brow the broad impress of popular sovereignty, and invited the King to hold his free Crown as a mere fief from the people, which simply meant the extinction of his power. Again, it proposed universal suffrage of the direct kind, which would utterly destroy fairness of representation, and bring the Left unduly to the front from the petty republicanised States. A third blemish was the annual budget clause, which would enable intriguing majorities to neutralise the royal power, and stop the machinery of State at will; while a further and more serious flaw was its demand that the future Emperor should recreate and unify all Germany—a condition which might impose upon the Kaiser the necessity of treating some of his fellow-princes as rebels, and of appealing, for example, for the action of the Bavarians against the house of Wittelsbach, or for that of the Hanoverians against the Guelphs. That, at least, was demanded by the revolutionary party, who would ere long approach the Kaiser with the imperial arms and say: "And think you, then, that this eagle was given you all for nothing?" Every means was clearly being employed to impose on Prussia the *rôle* in Germany which Sardinia had played in Italy, and to place her in the predicament of Charles Albert before the battle of Novara, where victory meant the destruction of the monarchy,

and his defeat a shameful peace. Had not their subserviency to Frankfort already shown them the astounding phenomenon of Prussian troops defending the Revolution in Schleswig against its lawful lord, and of some of their provinces being ruined for the second time by a struggle for the Emperor's beard, a true *querelle d'Allemand*? German unity was desired by every one who spoke German, but with such a Constitution he, for his part, would have none of it. Who, then, had declared in its favour? Only eight-and-twenty terrorised Governments still suffering from the March fever of the previous year, and ruling over about six and a half million subjects; against which were to be pitted Austria, Prussia, and four other German kingdoms with thirty-eight millions, not to speak of Baden, Holstein, Luxemburg, Limberg, and others whose consent was conditional or still in suspense. It was chiefly the rash resolution of the National Assembly, to which it stubbornly clung, that stood in the way of German unity; and it was the duty therefore of Prussia, at the moment when Europe was just beginning to recover from the welter of revolution, to oppose the sovereign desires of Frankfort, which had come exactly a year too late. Prussia, too, would thus be able all the sooner to promote German unity in the way adopted by the Government. Rather, however, than see his King become the vassal of political nobodies, he would prefer to see Prussia remain as she was. As such she would always be in a position to give Germany laws, not receive them from others. As representing the electoral capital of Brandenburg, the cradle of the Prussian monarchy, he felt all the more bound to prevent the destruction of that State edifice erected by centuries of patriotism and glory. The Frankfort crown might be very brilliant, but the gold which gave it genuineness must first be got by melting down the Prussian crown; and he had little hope that the whole could be successfully re-cast in the mould of the National Constitution.

The Revolution and the unity movement.

We have thought it worth while to give this somewhat lengthy summary of Bismarck's first speech on the Unity Question because it is the best explanation which could possibly be offered of the policy then pursued by Prussia,

as it likewise foreshadowed the path of national reform on which he himself was destined to lead her. That, if Frederick William had accepted the Frankfort crown, he would certainly have plunged Germany into the horrors of a civil war; and that, in standing forth as the apologist of the course he took, Bismarck proved himself to be a wiser man than most of his countrymen, cannot now surely be doubted. Nevertheless, his words of wisdom availed not with the Prussian Chamber, of which a majority declared itself in favour of the Frankfort Constitution; but the veto might of the Crown was stronger than the voting power of the Chamber, and the latter was dissolved. At the same time, the Frankfort Parliament melted away into insignificance, anarchy, and air; and the Revolution, which had still life enough left to show its furious teeth in Saxony and Baden, received the final *coup de grâce* from Prussian bayonets. The Revolution had brought constitutionalism to Prussia and most of the other States, but it had signally failed to combine them. It had destroyed absolutism, but it had not succeeded in constructing a federative and free imperialism. That was beyond its strength, because beyond its sphere; yet it gave fresh impulse to the unity movement, as well as to the King of Prussia's ambition—to guide that movement to the goal of the nation's hopes.

In the six months between the dissolution of the Chamber—which was followed by Frederick William's formal rejection of the Imperial crown—and the meeting of its successor, Prussia had not been idle in the matter

of the German question, as was proved by the papers presented to Parliament soon after it met. Chief among these was a treaty between Prussia, Saxony, and Hanover, who formed the so-called "Tri-Regal Alliance" for the purpose of creating a "restricted union" of all the German States save Austria—who would, however, be invited to conclude perpetual amity with them—while another National Assembly would be convoked to settle the Constitution. The basis of this new Charter, as agreed upon by the three Kings themselves, differed from the Frankfort patchwork of the same kind in that it conferred ampler separate rights on the various States, and invested the central power, not in an Emperor of the Germans, but in a Prussian President of a Princely College possessing an absolute veto on the decisions of the People's House. This scheme received the assent of most of the minor States, and it was likewise declared to be acceptable by the Liberal Rump of the Frankfort Parliament.

The Tri-Regal Alliance.

In the Prussian Chamber, Bismarck acted as the spokesman of about fifty members of the Right who moved approval of the Three-King Pact pure and simple. Not that he was in complete accord with the draft Imperial Constitution serving as the basis of the Alliance, but he saw no reason why that should prevent him from supporting a ministry which he honoured as representing social and political order as against democracy. Nor could he repress the wish that this was

the last time the achievements of the Prussian sword would be given away with generous hand (he was referring to the concessions

wrung from the Crown by the Revolution) in order to appease the insatiable demands of a phantom which, under the name of the spirit of the time or public opinion, stupefied with its deafening clamour the reason of princes and people till each grew afraid of the other's shadow, and forgot that beneath the lion's skin of the spectre there was only a very noisy but very innocuous animal.

He pointed out that the attempt to engraft the proposed new Federal State on the German Confederation represented by the Bund would in all probability end in a "quarrel for the Kaiser's beard," and he scoffed at the notion of Prussia's finding compensation enough for all the sacrifices demanded of her in the consciousness of having pursued a magnanimous and unselfish policy. The policy of Frederick the Great had often been referred to in connection with the union motion, but Bismarck scouted the comparison.

"Beware of a quarrel for the Kaiser's beard!"

"I am more inclined to believe," he said, "that Frederick II. would have turned" (for a solution of the question) "to the most prominent characteristic of the Prussian nation—its warlike element—and not without success. For he would have known that now, too, as in the days of our fathers, the sound of the trumpet summoning all to the standard of their sovereign-lord has not yet lost its charm for the Prussian ear, be it for the defence of our own frontiers or for the glory and greatness of Prussia. After the rupture with Frankfort he would have had the choice of allying himself with Austria, his old comrade-in-arms, and of assuming the brilliant *rôle* played by the Emperor of Russia in assisting Austria to annihilate the common foe, revolution; or it would have been open to him, after rejection of the Imperial Frankfort crown, by the same right as that by which he had conquered Silesia, to decide for the Germans in the matter of their Constitution at the risk" (on their refusing) "of his casting the sword into the scale. That would have been a national Prussian policy. In the former case community with Austria, in the latter her own exertions would have given Prussia the proper position for

helping Germany to be the Power in Europe which it ought to be. But the draft Constitution annihilates specific Prussianism, . which has saved the country from the Revolution and almost alone survived it. . . . It was a Prussian regiment which on 18th September, 1848, saved us from what the Frankfort Parliament conjured up against us. . . . It was the attachment of the Prussian people to their ruling house ; it was the old Prussian virtues of honour, loyalty, obedience, and bravery, which permeate the army from its framework, the corps of officers, to the youngest recruit. This army cherishes no tricolour enthusiasm. In it, as among the rest of the people, you will not find any longing for national regeneration. It is content with the name of Prussian, and proud of it too. These hosts will follow the black-and-white banner, but not the tricolour; and under the former gladly die for their country. Nay, since the 18th March, they have come to regard the tricolour as the badge of their opponents. Familiar to and beloved by them are the strains of the 'Prussian Air,' the 'Old Dessauer' and the 'Hohenfriedberg' marches, but I have never yet heard a Prussian soldier sing, 'What is the German's Fatherland?' The people from whom this army is drawn, and who are most truly represented by it, have no desire to see their Prussian kingdom melt away in the putrifying ferment of South-German anarchy. Their loyalty does not cleave to an imperial paper presidency, nor to a princely board of six, but rather to a free and living King of Prussia, the heir of his forefathers; and what this people wills we also wish with it. We all desire to behold the Prussian eagle spread its protecting and controlling pinions from the Memel to the Donnersberg; but free we wish to see it, not fettered by a new Diet of Ratisbon, and not clipped in the wings by that equalising hedgehook whereof we well remember that it was first at Gotha converted into an instrument of peace, while but a few weeks previously in Frankfort it was brandished as a threatening weapon against Prussianism and the ordinances of our King. Prussians we are, and Prussians we will remain. I know that in these words I but express the creed of the Prussian army and of the majority of my countrymen; and I hope to God that we shall also remain Prussians long after this bit of paper" (the German Constitution) "has mouldered away like a withered autumn leaf."

Prussian, not German.

"Where there is much light," said a Liberal deputy (Beckerath) in replying to the above speech, "there will also be much shadow; the great German Fatherland must also have a lost son." To which Bismarck replied that "his father's house was Prussia, and that if anyone were a homeless wanderer it was the honourable member, whose paternal mansion was only being founded, if, indeed, they had yet got beyond blasting the rock for it."

But Bismarck consoled himself with the reflection that the omens were all against the occurrence of the evils which he dreaded. For Austria had declined to countenance the idea of the "restricted union," while Bavaria and Würtemberg refused to enter it. Other minor States, too, had their scruples; and thus Hanover and Saxony, who had reserved to themselves the right of retiring from the triple-partnership should all the other States, save Austria, not be brought to promise their adhesion to the contemplated Union, now began to claim release from the Three-King Pact. What was poor Frederick William to do? What he did was to conciliate Austria by concluding the so-called "Interim Arrangement," which provisionally invested the central power of the Bund in an Austro-Prussian Executive Committee, into whose hands the *Reichsverweser* of the Frankfort Parliament now recommitted his trust. Austria was just as anxious for the resuscitation of the old Diet, as Prussia was eager for the creation of a new Empire; and each, looking at the future of Germany from different points of view,

An "Interim Arrangement."

welcomed this arrangement as a sure transition step to the attainment of its ideal. It was only when the two noble hounds were bound together in the same leash, that their straining in opposite directions revealed the existence of a double scent.

Both Saxony and Hanover had been gradually falling away from the Tri-Regal Alliance, which was based on a mutual agreement to summon another German Assembly; but the defection of his allies, thought Frederick William, was no reason why he, too, should break his solemn promise to the nation. So the final outcome of his doubts and difficulties was the issue of an electoral law in the name of the three Kings for the return of another German Parliament at Erfurt. But this step was immediately protested against, no less by his co-executor Austria than by his confederate Saxony who deemed the act at least premature, and by Hanover, who ignored it altogether; while another competitor now appeared in the field in the shape of a Quadruple Alliance between the Kings of Hanover, Saxony, Würtemberg and Bavaria, who had concocted a rival Constitution more likely to prove acceptable to Austria. The Prussian envoys were withdrawn from Stuttgart and Hanover, and in a speech from the throne the King of Würtemberg vehemently assailed the union policy of Prussia. Yet in spite of all this discouragement, and even downright opposition, the elections were held; and the second German Parliament, summoned by Frederick William, met at Erfurt on the 20th of March, 850. But was

A Quadruple Alliance, and the tailors of Tooley Street.

it a German Parliament, men asked, which only contained delegates from Prussia and some of the other minor States? The German tailors of Tooley Street, so to speak, had again assembled.

Of this second Constituent Reichstag* Herr von Bismarck was not only a member but also an office-bearer, for, as being the youngest of his colleagues—he was only thirty-five—he had to act as secretary, or Speaker's clerk. By the posterity of a hundred years hence Martin Luther and Prince Bismarck will undoubtedly be regarded as the Castor and Pollux of German history; and it is a remarkable coincidence that each of these greatest heroes of the German nation made his *début*, so to speak, as European actor on the very same obscure provincial stage. It was in the University library of Erfurt that Luther first discovered the Bible, while it was in the church of the Augustines that he was consecrated and read his first mass; and it was in this identical church of the Augustines that Herr von Bismarck, as a member of the futile Union Parliament of 1850, first gave indica-

Bismarck and Luther; a strange coincidence.

* The Erfurt Parliament sat from 20th of March to 29th of April, 1850. It consisted of a *Staatenhaus* and a *Volkshaus*. Half the members in the former were returned by the Governments and the other half by their representative Diets; while the latter was wholly elected by the people on the Prussian (double or indirect principle of voting, which had somehow or other fanned the radical chaff from the political wheat, and sent up a majority of moderate Liberals. To these were opposed a minority of Ultra-Conservative or *Kreuz-Zeitung* men, and with the latter, on the extreme Right, Bismarck took his seat. It was opened with an enthusiastic speech from the Prussian Commissioner, Herr von Radowitz, who presided over the provisional *Verwaltungsrath*, or Administrative Council of the Union, composed of representatives of Prussia, Saxony, Hesse, Nassau, and Brunswick.

tion to his countrymen of how national unity could, or rather could not, be attained.* For his attitude was still sceptical and negative.

"I am quite ready to go to Erfurt," he said to his constituents, "as it seems to me highly necessary for Prussia, who can form the only sound and strong basis of a restricted German union, to be defended against the weakening and disintegrating attacks of the so-called German and Frankfort men. We shall be in danger there of making very considerable sacrifices of our power, especially our financial power, without achieving anything but a diminution of our independence in favour of the minor States."

His programme was further illustrated by what he wrote in a presentation-album to Professor Stahl, of Berlin: "Our watchword is not Federal State at any price, but integrity of the Prussian Crown at any price." Herr von Manteuffel had been ordered by the King to try, if possible, and arrange an understanding between the moderate Liberals and the Prussian party; and for this purpose he brought Herr von Gagern and Herr von Bismarck together. But the result was barren.

Neither federation nor flummery.

"I tackled Gagern," said Bismarck once, "and explained my whole position in a very sober and business like way. And then you should have heard him—how he put on his Jupiter face, lifted his

* Said a Correspondent of *The Times*, when describing the Luther commemoration-festival at Erfurt, August 8, 1883:—"Anticipating the veneration of posterity, the town authorities have already put up an inscription on the very modest little house where the political Unifier of the Fatherland lodged when attending the Erfurt Parliament; and as that little house was to-day passed by the multitudes of students who had assembled to do honour to the religious Liberator of Germany, they raised such a clamour of enthusiasm as left no doubt about the heartiness of their hero-worship."

eyebrows, bristled up his hair, rolled his eyes about, fixed them on the ceiling till they all but cracked, and talked at me with his big phrases as if I had been a public meeting. But that, of course, got nothing out of me. I answered him quite coolly, and we remained as far apart as ever. He is frightfully stupid—a mere phrase watering-pot of a fellow—nothing to be done with him."*

The task of the Erfurt Reichstag was analogous to that of the Frankfort Parliament. But whereas the latter, with that hair-splitting painstakingness so dear to the professorial mind, had dawdled over its work more than a year, its Erfurt successor went to the other absurd extreme and rushed it through in less than a month. The former had allowed its constitutional cakes to burn till they were unfit for eating; the latter had gulped them greedily down before they had seen the fire. Bismarck himself compared its conduct to that of a "fiery fox-hunter who leaps a wall into a bog, without knowing how he and his horse are to get out again." There had been proposed two distinct methods of treating the Constitution as presented by the allied States. The Left, on the principle of hanging a man first and trying him afterwards, were for at once and unreservedly voting it in a lump, "in order, before all things, to bind together the Governments," and then revising it; while the Right, and with more reason one would think, urged that it should first be revised and then voted. Nevertheless, the Left prevailed. Nor was it to any purpose that Bismarck subsequently rose and protested against "a non-Prussian

The Erfurt Parliament, and the "fiery fox-hunter."

* "Bismarck in the Franco-German War."

majority" having thus violently "obtruded" on his native country a decision come to in defiance of business form.

He looked upon the whole proceedings as a farce; and he urged the substitution of the phrase "*Deutsche Union*" for "*Deutsches Reich*," in order to make its collapse look less ridiculous should several of the allied Governments tear the "net of fraternal German love thus suddenly flung over them." President Simson, on assuming office, had reminded the Assembly that exactly one thousand years ago a Reichstag had met in Erfurt; and Bismarck (who was no less deeply versed in ancient German history than this famous jurist) profited by the allusion to show from old Spangenberg, the chronicler, that "King Louis had held it in order to put an end to the flaying practices of attorneys and pettifoggers who at that time were an intolerable nuisance in Germany." And should its successor (added Bismarck, with bitter mockery) achieve a similar result, then "he would believe that the ravens of the Kyffhäuser had vanished, and that the day of German unity was near."*

The ravens of the Kyffhäuser.

His soul was sickened by the complicated system of governing machinery, with its princely colleges, councils,

* A reference to the legend which represents Barbarossa as sitting asleep before a stone table in a cave of the Kyffhauser Mountain (in the Harz), and dreaming of the way in which he shall reconquer and reconstitute Germany. A shepherd having once been introduced by a dwarf into the cave, Barbarossa rose and asked his visitor "whether the ravens were still flying round the mountain?" and, on receiving an affirmative answer, sank down again with a sigh and a cry that he would still have to sleep another hundred years.

and all the rest of it, under which it was proposed to "draw the thread-bare coat of French constitutionalism over the unwieldy body of German unity;" and he made an elaborate estimate of relative forces to show that under the contemplated Constitution, a million Badeners would have as much political power as sixteen million Prussians, a result which would be tantamount to the "mediatisation" of the King of Prussia in his own country.

A Prussian Bucephalus.

"Gentlemen," he said, for his words on this occasion deserve to be fully quoted, "it has pained me to see Prussians here, and not only nominal Prussians, who adhere to this Constitution and warmly defend it; it has been humiliating to me, as it would have been to thousands and thousands of my countrymen, to see the representatives of Princes, whom I honour in their lawful sphere, but who are not my sovereign lords—to see them invested with supreme power; and the bitterness of this feeling was not softened at the opening of this Assembly by my seeing the seats on which we sit adorned with colours which were never the colours of the German Empire, but for the last two years rather the badge of rebellion and barricades—colours which, in my native country, apart from the democrats, are only worn in sorrowful obedience by the soldier. Gentlemen, if you do not make more concessions to the Prussian, to the old Prussian spirit, call it what you will, than you have hitherto done in this Constitution, then I do not believe in its realisation; and if you attempt to impose this Constitution on this Prussian spirit, you will find in it a Bucephalus * who carries his accustomed lord and rider with daring joy, but will fling to the earth the presuming Cockney horseman, with all his trappings of sable, red and gold. But I am comforted in my fear of these eventualities by the firm belief that it will not be long before the parties come to regard this Constitution as the two doctors in Lafontaine's fable did the patient whose corpse

* The favourite charger of Alexander the Great, which none but himself could break and mount.

they had just left. 'He is dead,' said one, 'I said he would die all along.' 'Had he taken my advice,' quoth the other, 'he would be still alive.'"

Powerless to withstand the headlong charge of the levelling Unionists, Bismarck aimed a singing Parthian shot at their odious parent, the Revolution. In the Prussian Chamber he had advocated a repressive remedy against what he called "moral blood-poisoning" by the Press; * and now, when the "fundamental rights" of the German people came on for discussion, he urged that the utmost restrictions should be imposed on the right of public meeting, "wherein lay the edge of those shears with which the constitutional Delilah clipped the locks of the monarchical Samson, in order to give him over defenceless into the hands of the democratic Philistines." He essayed to paint in sombre colours the evils of free assemblage, which was "the fire-bellows of democracy," the most dangerous weapon of negative spirits against authority, and calculated to make the believer in human nature "veil himself in dull and hopeless melancholy." These were Bismarck's last words in the Erfurt Parliament, not being minded, as he said, "to take any further part in the debates of an Assembly which, ever since it swallowed the Constitution at a gulp, was lapsing more and more into the state of that doomed

The constitutional Delilah and the monarchical Samson.

* As Secretary in the Erfurt Parliament Bismarck had excluded the representative of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* (of Augsburg) from the reporter's gallery for some offence or other; nor could he be induced to withdraw his interdict, even by a threat of the other journalists to strike work.

professor of Syracuse (Archimedes) who, to the 'facts' pressing in upon him, called out in his theoretic abstraction: '*noli turbare circulos meos*,' without making the least impression on any one."

In the following letter addressed by Bismarck to his friend, the editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, we have a vivid reflection of his habits and feelings about this time: *

"Schönhausen, June, 30, 1850. . . . . I am leading an incredibly lazy life here, smoking, reading, strolling about, and playing the paterfamilias. Of politics I only read in the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, so that I am not at all in danger of heterodox contagion, and this idyllic solitude suits me very well. I loll about on the grass, read poetry, listen to music, and wait till the cherries are ripe. Indeed, I should not at all be surprised if this pastoral life gives my next political efforts at Erfurt or Berlin a character reminding one of Beckerath" (a mystical and high-flown deputy from Rhineland), "and of gentle summer airs laden with the fragrance of blossom. I have not read the Press Law, but will have time enough to do so when it comes on for discussion, and I therefore do not know that I can endorse all your censure. . . . The mistake, in my opinion, lies less in the too great influence of the officials than in their general character. A State which cannot by a good wholesome thunderstorm tear itself away from a bureaucracy like ours is, and remains, doomed to destruction, since it lacks the instruments requisite for the performance of all the functions incumbent on a State, and not merely for the supervision of the Press.

Bismarck a modern Khalif Omar.

"I cannot deny that, like Khalif Omar, I have a certain longing not only to annihilate all books, except the Christian 'Koran, but also to destroy the means of restoring them. The art of printing is the choice weapon of anti-Christ; more so, indeed, than gunpowder, which, though originally the chief, or at least the most visible engine for overturning natural political order and establishing the sovereign

* First published in 1884 by Herr Wagener, in his Memoirs (*Erlebtes, meine Memoiren aus der Zeit von 1848 bis 1866, and von 1873 bis jetzt*).

rocher de bronze, is now more and more assuming the character of a salutary medicine against the evils created by itself—albeit, perhaps, in some measure it belongs to the physic-stock of that doctor who cured a case of cancer in the face by amputating the head. To apply this remedy to the Press were like a fancy production in the manner of Callot. . . . But our bureaucracy is eaten up with cancer in head and limbs, its belly only is sound, and the excrements it parts with in the shape of laws are the most natural dirt in the world. With this bureaucracy, including judges, we might have a Press constitution like that of the angels, but for all that it would not help us out of the ruck. With bad laws and good officials (judges) we could always get along, but with bad officials the best laws would avail us naught."

End of the Erfurt "tongue-tournament."

The Erfurt Parliament had no sooner done its work (in a score of sittings) than it was ostensibly adjourned, but in reality dissolved. The fear in high quarters that it had perhaps gone too far prevented it from going any farther. The Frankfort Constitution had been elaborated by the people, and rejected by the Princes; while the Erfurt Charter was drafted by the Princes, and also approved by the people, but allowed by the former to remain a dead letter. A mere castle of cards, it was blown into a thousand directions by the first reactionary breeze. The great mass of the German people were not at all disappointed with the result of the Erfurt "tongue-tournament," because they had viewed it from the beginning with indifference and distrust; yet the liberal Press teemed with the bitterest abuse of the Prussian Junker-party, to whose narrow-minded patriotism and egotism was attributed the failure of the Confederation. Bismarck afterwards ascribed the

Erfurt fiasco mainly to the attitude of Hanover and Saxony, who dreaded the Austrian army more than they trusted the Tri-Regal Alliance; but he also argued that, far from frustrating the union plan, it was not in the power of any party or parties to make it succeed.

A week had not elapsed since the adjournment of the Erfurt Parliament when ambitious Austria, egged on by Russia, and supported by several of the anti-Prussian States, issued invitations for a plenary meeting of the old Diet; while about the same time a Congress of minor Princes, favourable to Prussia, met at Berlin to discuss the realisation of the "restricted union." Weeks passed in empty talk, and the contemplated union became more than ever restricted. Indeed, it soon grew limited to Prussia, whose monarch, with the true devotion of the philosopher he was, clung to his pet theory when all his disciples had dropped away and joined the opposite school. Meanwhile Austria had not been idle, and the month of September (1850) beheld the attainment of her heart's desire—the resuscitation of the suspended or quasi-comatose Diet. Prussia was invited to resume her seat in it under very flattering conditions, but she refused; alleging that she was equally bound by honour and interest to support the "restricted union." Austria and Prussia had now revealed their trump cards. The secret rivalry which had long existed between these leading Powers now flashed out. Germany had now two rulers—a Princely College at Erfurt, and a Diet at Frankfort, and every moment

Germany under two rulers.

increased the peril of a quarrel and a collision between them. The climax soon came.

Consequences of a "Revolution in slippers and dressing-gown."

The decisive apple of discord was furnished by the Elector of Hesse who, animated by the reactionary spirit which seized most German Sovereigns when relieved from the pressure of the Revolution, was doing all he could to nullify the Constitution previously wrung from him. The people suffered much at the hands of this Hessian Charles and his Strafford (Hassenpflug); but there are limits even to the patience of the much-enduring German, and at last the Duchy rose to a man against an attempt to levy illegal taxes on it, though it was a mere "Revolution in slippers and dressing-gown," yet the despotic pair fled before it to Frankfort and invoked the aid of the Diet; and the Diet, suckled as it had been on the ideas of Metternich, cheerfully decreed the despatch of an Austro-Bavarian army to reinstate the fugitive tyrant on his throne. On the other hand Prussia, deeming herself bound by the terms of the Federal Union (to which Hesse had also subscribed) to maintain the integrity of its Constitution, likewise despatched a body of troops to execute justice; and the two armies came within sight of each other in the region of Fulda.

"I shall fire on the first who fires!"

Here, then, at last, were the eager dogs of civil war straining in their leash, and to the Emperor Nicholas it was only due that they were not straightway slipped. "I shall fire on the first who fires," * he said, and the Prussians were finally

* Cited by Bismarck *as a fact* in the course of a speech on the Eastern Question in the Reichstag, 19th February, 1878.

withdrawn, but not before a military misunderstanding threatened to precipitate the settlement of the great German question with blood and iron. About this time Count Brandenburg, chief of the "Saving-Deed Ministry," who had gone to Warsaw to crave the mediation of the Czar, returned to Berlin so deeply wounded with the harsh and discouraging reception accorded him that he fell into a delirious fever which carried him off, invoking bloody vengeance in his last moments for this insult to the honour of his King and country. His place was taken by Freiherr von Manteuffel, a peace-at-any-price man, into whose hands also Herr von Radowitz, the genius of the "restricted union," was asked to commit the charge of foreign affairs; and off he started for Olmütz to negotiate peace, or rather the aversion of war, with Schwarzenberg, the ambitious minister (and master) of the youthful Francis Joseph. Indecision and confusion reigned in the councils of Berlin. The Prussian army yearned to show its prowess, but the King, who still clung to the traditions of the Holy Alliance, shrank from the thought of drawing the sword on Austria; especially as the latter was backed by Russia, and supported by the most considerable of the German States. Manteuffel had been instructed to make fair concessions, but Schwarzenberg insisted on complete submission; and the usual diplomatic chaffering ended in the signature of a Convention which bound Prussia unconditionally to abandon all her union projects, to let the "federal execution" take its course in Hesse and in the Elbe Duchies (the former being restored

to its tyrannical Duke, the latter to the kidnapping Danes), and to recognise the restoration of the old Germanic Diet under the presidency of Austria.

This, then, was Olmütz (21st November, 1850). Shame and exasperation filled the Prussian mind; the Austrian heart swelled with exultation and pride. Prussia, who had constituted herself the champion of German unity, now stood convicted as the betrayer of the national cause, and all because a Romanticist sat on the throne of the Cæsars. With a brave and invincible army at his back, a full treasury, and a devoted people, Frederick William had submitted to conditions which Frederick the Great would have spurned after his regiments had been destroyed, his exchequer drained, and his subjects disheartened. The bloodless defeat of Olmütz had brought Prussia nearly as low as the bloody catastrophe of Jena; but the former, like the latter, was only the degradation which preceded victory. For another Freiherr vom Stein was already in training to retrieve his country's sullied honour, and do signal vengeance on its foes.

Olmütz, 1850.

The climax of the national aspirations had now been reached; and it may seem strange that the *dénouement* of this part of the drama had no more vigorous defender than the man who was fated to bring about the anti-climax. The unconverted Saul of Tarsus could hardly have shown more zeal in persecuting the Christians, than the unpersuaded Herr von Bismarck displayed in scoffing at the Unionists. Of these Unionists the Prussian champion had been Herr von

A political Saul of Tarsus.

Radowitz, who likewise counselled his Sovereign to resist the arrogant pretensions of Austria; and when Bismarck heard of his fall, he thus wrote to his friend the editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, 7th November, 1850:—

"On reading your Monday's budget of news, the evening before last, I was so delighted that I rode round the table on my chair, and many a bottle of champagne has been drunk to the health of Herr von Radowitz on this side of the Gallenberg" (a water-shed spur of Pomerania dividing it into a somewhat Liberal and a Reactionary half). "For the first time, one feels grateful towards him, and wishes him *bon voyage*. My mind has now been quite relieved, and I quite share your feelings. Now let there be war, where and with whom you like; and all our Prussian sword-blades will glitter high and blithely in the sun. I feel as if an incubus had been taken from my breast, albeit Heydt and Ladenberg (two obnoxious ministers), whom we thought we had already digested between us, come up again sour to the taste."

Bismarck defended Olmütz, and his motives for doing so were mixed.* In the first place, he well knew that Prussia was not at all in a position to take the field against Austria with anything like the prospect of success, and he may have looked upon Olmütz as, on the whole, the lesser of two evils. It is true, he had always sneered at the various lines of policy which Prussia had now consented to abandon; but above all things he was

The defender of Olmütz.

* Here is what Herr Wagener (editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*) says of Olmütz:—"Herr von Bismarck would not have been and remained our partisan, just as he scarcely would have then drawn me closer to him, had he not known that I was in agreement with the schemes which he even then cherished, though they could only gradually come to be executed. Olmütz was felt as deeply by us as by any other; nevertheless, we did not act like drunken demagogues, but like responsible politicians who saw the wisdom of eating cold the dish of their revenge."—*Meine Memoiren, etc.*

a patriot, and a patriot, too, of the martial type, to whom the honour of the army was as dear as his own; and though he may have rejoiced that the schemes of Prince Schwarzenberg had triumphed over those of Herr von Radowitz, he could scarcely have been free from a pang of bitterness at the humiliating way in which the victory had been achieved. It is certain, at least, that what he now defended as a blessing, he subsequently vowed to avenge as a shame and a curse; and perhaps it might hit the truth to suppose that his defence of Olmütz was inspired by the blended motives of the patriot who argues from conviction, and the partisan who votes from duty. The Government had irrevocably committed itself to a grave act of policy, and we have seen how Bismarck occasionally supported a ministry whose particular actions he did not approve. What foreigners would think of his country was a consideration ever present to his mind; and his patriotism, therefore, prompted him to make his Sovereign appear in the right, even when half convinced, perhaps, that he was in the wrong. Dr. Johnson never took more pains to report the debates of Parliament to the detriment of the "Whig dogs," than Bismarck has always taken to interpret the acts of the Prussian Crown in a wise and glorious light. Besides, he was willing to pardon anything in a Government which showed a resolute front against democracy, the counteracting of which he meanwhile regarded as a far more pressing task than the establishment of national unity; and as Austria had shown far greater zeal in the former direc-

And the friend of Austria.

tion than in the latter, Bismarck was fain almost to hail the temporary subordination of the Hohenzollerns to the Hapsburgs as a certain means of rooting out the last seeds of that Revolution which had already, in his opinion, borne such baneful fruit.

The speech in which he defended the policy of Olmütz was remarkable as a piece of special pleading. On 3rd December Freiherr von Manteuffel, returned from Olmütz, had given to the Lower Chamber a somewhat meagre account of his mission, and in the ensuing debate on the address the Liberals moved that the King should be asked to dismiss advisers who had placed the country in such a fatal position. Bismarck warmly opposed the motion.

The fact, he argued, that the nation had risen as it were (on the army being mobilised to support the Hessians against their tyrant rulers) at the call of the King did not prove that it had any real understanding of the question at issue, but only that it was imbued as of old with loyalty and unreasoning obedience, virtues which were sadly wanting in the representatives of the people. The address spoke of the time as great, but he found it exceedingly petty; and then he went on to detail the dangers and horrors of a war between Prussia and two of three great Continental powers (Austria and Russia), while a third (France) stood arming and "lusting after booty on their borders." But he would not even shrink from such a war if any one could prove it had a worthy object, and was prompted neither by the spirit of robbery nor of romanticism. The national honour, to his mind, did not consist in Prussia playing the Don Quixote everywhere in Germany for "mortified Chamber celebrities" who deemed their Constitution in danger, but rather in holding aloof from shameful alliance with democracy—both in Hesse, where the quarrel was not worth a pinch of powder, and in Schleswig-Holstein whose revolutionary way of asserting its rights he could not approve. How German unity was to be promoted by a *Sonderbund*,

which sought to shoot and murder in the South, and remove the centre of gravity of the question to Paris and Warsaw, he could not see; and if Prussia went to war for her union idea—"that mongrel product of timid rulers and tame revolution," which would have the effect of mediatising her under the Chambers of the petty States—she "would only resemble the Englishman who fought a victorious combat with a sentinel in order to be able to hang himself in the sentry-box, a right he claimed for himself and every free Briton." But if war were waged for the idea, "it would not be long before violent hands would wrench from the Federalists the last shreds of their union-mantle, and leave nothing but the *red* underlining." He could not understand those who spoke of Austria as a non-German Power, simply because she had the good fortune to rule over mixed races which had been subdued by German arms; he looked upon Austria as the representative and heir of an ancient Power which had often and gloriously wielded the national sword. The proposed war was one of democratic propaganda, but the Prussian standard should not mark the gathering ground for all the political outcasts of Europe; and on every one who could prevent the war but would not, he "invoked the curse of every honest soldier who dies for a cause which in his heart he despises and damns."

Despises and damns! That was the last that was heard of the German question in the Prussian Chamber for many years to come. A few weeks after the Olmütz debate, Dresden became the scene of "free ministerial conferences" under the patronage of Austria, which merely ended in confirming the Olmütz Convention of November, and in re-erecting the old Bund on the ruins of the national plans and hopes. The debating, the fighting, the bloodshed, all the promises of kings, the efforts of patriots and the dreams of philosophers, had come to nothing; and things had returned with mortifying exactness to the *status quo*. Bismarck hailed with apparent joy the

Shelving of the German question.

abandonment of schemes which, however high and praiseworthy in themselves, were still incapable of bearing fruit, and the return to the loose Confederation of old. It was about this time that he challenged the Chamber "to point to any period in German history since the days of the Hohenstaufens, apart from the Spanish supremacy of Charles V., when Germany enjoyed greater respect abroad, with a higher degree of political unity and a greater authority in diplomacy, than during the time when the (much abused) Bundestag (Diet) managed the foreign relations of the nation."

A man, thought the King, who was such a devoted admirer of Austria, and had such a high opinion of the Diet, had better be sent to it; so Herr von Bismarck was raised *per saltum* to the rank of Privy Councillor of Legation, and made secretary to the Prussian member (Herr von Rochow) of the representative Assembly of German Sovereigns at Frankfort. His appointment was the idea of the King himself who, with all his faults, was an excellent judge of character. Even as early as 1848 His Majesty had been inclined to give Bismarck a portfolio,* and

Bismarck a Privy Councillor of Legation.

* In his "*Die Politik Friedrich Wilhelm IV.*" (Berlin 1883), Herr Wagener (ex-editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*) writes:—"It was this man (Freiherr Senfft von Pilsach) who, in August, 1848, and afterwards in March, 1854 (before the outbreak of the Crimean War) recommended the King to make Bismarck a minister; but his proposals came to nothing through the opposition of those immediately about the King, who, in the former case (1848) urged that Herr von Bismarck was too inexperienced and unpopular, and at the same time somewhat too much of a Hotspur; while on the second occasion (1854) they resisted the suggestion, not as thinking that Herr von Bismarck was unqualified for the post, but because they did not wish to see Herr von Manteuffel go out of office."

was only turned from his purpose by those who held the Junker to be too unpopular, inexperienced, and fiery. But if his youth had rendered him unfit for the post of minister, his training had been the opposite of that which qualifies for a diplomatic career; and yet Bismarck accepted the appointment that had been offered him at Frankfort without the least hesitation. He had been suddenly dazzled with the prospect of a "*carrière ouverte aux talents*," and he embraced it with a decision which implied boundless confidence in his native fitness for it.

His parliamentary life was now over, and the best introduction he carried with him to his colleagues at Frankfort was the reputation which he had acquired during this career: a reputation for unflinching loyalty to the Crown, and for a Conservatism which had been branded not only as "mediæval" but as "antediluvian;" for startling originality in his views, and fearlessness in expressing them; for a rugged style of speech which, though not eloquent, was persuasive; for great fertility of resource in debate, with an impetuous mode of attack and a scathing power of reply; for wit, and humour, and a fertile fancy; for an inimitable power of telling a story; for mastery of the details of constitutional law and of military organisation; for an extensive knowledge of modern history and languages, balanced by a surprising acquaintance with classic lore; for high-souled honour, for burning patriotism, and for having in him the making of a great man.

His diplomatic stock-in-trade.

CHAPTER IV.

DIPLOMATIC CAREER.

1. *At Frankfort.*

The Diet of Frankfort, at which Herr von Bismarck now began to figure, was the Administrative Council, so to speak, of the Germanic Confederation founded by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. But it was in no sense a Parliament. Its sittings were secret. It made no laws. Its legislative functions were confined to the voting of ordinances, and its executive power was so brittle and uncertain that it sometimes even failed to enforce these. It did not contain a single representative of the various peoples of whose destinies it arrogated the control. The Germanic Confederation was nothing but a loose League of Sovereigns who aimed at preserving order in their own dominions, and at presenting a united front to foreign aggression; and of this alliance the Diet was the outward expression and organ. It was composed of seventeen delegates representing the various sovereign States and Cities of Germany—more than thirty in number—and was presided over by Austria.* In theory

Constitution and character of the Germanic Diet.

* In the Diet there was one representative for each of the following equal votes: 1, Austria; 2, Prussia; 3, Bavaria; 4, Kingdom of Saxony;

it could receive and send diplomatic missions; but, though the leading Powers of Europe were always represented at the Diet, it never exercised its own prerogative in this respect save in one or two special cases, such as its appointment of Baron von der Pfordten and Count Beust to attend the London Conferences about the Elbe Duchies. In like manner, its theoretical right to make treaties was never exercised, though various conventions contracted by its members with each other and with foreign States were laid before it, and, if recognised, were supposed to become binding on all the Confederation. But the leading States jealously guarded their own exclusive rights in treaty matters, and were anxious that the Diet should rather serve as a mere court of registration than as a court of revision. The consequences were grave. The omission of Austria and Prussia to submit to the Diet the Treaty of London (of 1852), regulating, as by a kind of new Pragmatic Sanction, the succession to the Danish Crown, resulted in its repudiation by the minor Powers of the Germanic body, and in the serious complications to which we shall afterwards have to refer.

Thus it will be seen that, though representing

5, Hanover; 6, Würtemberg; 7, Grand Duchy of Baden; 8, Electorate of (or Kur-) Hesse; 9, Grand-Ducal Hesse; 10, Denmark (for the Elbe Duchies); 11, The Netherlands (for Limburg and Luxemburg); 12, Duchies of Saxe-Meiningen, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and Saxe-Altenburg (called the Ernestines); 13, Brunswick and Nassau; 14, the two Mecklenburgs (Schwerin and Strelitz); 15, Oldenburg, Anhalt, and the two Schwarzburgs (Rudolstadt and Sondershausen); 16, the Transparencies, or *Durchlauchten*, including Lichenstein, Reuss, Schaumburg-Lippe, Lippe-Detmold, Waldeck, and Hesse-Homburg; 17, the Free Cities (Lübeck, Frankfort, Bremen, and Hamburg).

Sovereigns, the Diet was anything but sovereign in its relations to foreign States; and even in domestic affairs its influence was by no means supreme. Its impotent pretentiousness frequently made it the laughing-stock of all Europe. Whether it would have been able to oppose a united Germany to foreign aggression it is impossible to say, as it never had to try during its existence; but in the achievement of its other main object—the preservation of internal order—it more than once signally failed. It was powerless to put down the Revolution of 1848; its orders were discarded and laughed at; and it had even been temporarily swept aside by a passing wave of popular discontent. It rendered itself obnoxious to the nation by its invariable tendency to side with its own sovereign members in constitutional conflicts with their subjects. It winked hard at tyranny, and it required the most flagrant injustice to be done to rouse it to any action against an established Government. But its encouragement of despotism was nothing to its inveterate habit of delay; and in this respect the Germanic Diet acquired a reputation similar to that formerly enjoyed by the English Court of Chancery.

But even these inherent evils were insignificant compared with the block to business from another cause. The Diet was as full of jealousies and intrigues as the palace or the harem of the Sultan. It was less a Diet than a diplomatic conference. When Charles V. said that the German race was "dreamy, drunken, and incapable of intrigue,"* he little thought how the latter part of

* Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic." Part I., Chapter 1.

his apothegm, but the latter part only, would be falsified by the consequential knot of bestarred and beribboned gentlemen who were to sit at Frankfort from the second to the seventh decade of the nineteenth century. When the two leading members were agreed on any matter, the proceedings of the Diet were prompt and decisive; but, if Austria and Prussia differed, the game of chicane and manœuvring knew no bounds. Whether to support a Conservative Power which they loved, or a Liberal Power which they feared, was then the question which agitated the minds of the minor States, and it rarely happened that their eventual decision was prompted as much by honour as by interest. With all its faults, however, the Diet contained some of Germany's best intellects; while in it "every throb of the heart of the great Fatherland had its responsive pulsation, and nothing that occurred within or without its limits, having the slightest connection with national interests, passed unnoticed."*

A "diplomatic suckling."

The re-galvanised Diet re-assembled in May (1851), and Bismarck, whose appointment was dated the 10th of that month, lost no time in repairing to his post. Like his first appearance in Parliament, his nomination to Frankfort was received

* For the substance of this brief account of the Diet—apart from Karl Fischer's "*Die Nation und der Bundestag*" (Leipzig, 1880)—we have been mainly indebted to "The Overthrow of the Germanic Confederation by Prussia in 1866," by Sir Alexander Malet, Bart., &c., who represented her Britannic Majesty at Frankfort from 1852 to 1866, and who lived in familiar intercourse with Herr von Bismarck for the first half of that period. And yet Sir Alexander, in his preface, refers to his friend as "*Freiherr*, or (as it is usually rendered) Baron v. Bismarck!"

by the Opposition Press with sneers and laughter. One journal called him a "diplomatic suckling," while another remarked that "this fellow had impudence enough to undertake the command of a frigate, or a surgical operation, though equally ignorant of both, if asked to do so.* By his own colleagues at the Diet, on the other hand, he would seem to have been welcomed with about as much cordiality as that wherewith a dovecote might open its doors to a bird of strange and unfamiliar plumage. Bismarck himself once described the Diet as composed of a "drowsy, insipid set of creatures, endurable only when I appeared among them like so much pepper." Deep and incurable is the conventionality of the bureaucratic-German mind, and heads were shaken at the unwonted sight of diplomacy being adopted by a man who, above all things, had never passed his final State examination;† who had spent the greater part of his youth and manhood among horses, cattle, and country farmers; who was only a lieutenant of militia with one decoration (it was for saving life, not destroying it); and whose manners

*"That was the way," said the Chancellor once in the Reichstag (21st February, 1879), "in which the Liberal prints recommended me to my Frankfort colleagues, especially the Austrians. But still, gentlemen, the surgical operation" (amputation of a mortified Austrian limb from the German body-politic) "was afterwards performed to your satisfaction, as I believe."

† In a despatch to his chief at Berlin, Bismarck wrote:—"While belauding Herr v. Prokesch, the *Postamts-Zeitung* has had its fling at me, asserting that I was never anything but an Auscultator (law-student attached to a court) and a country squire, but I must confess that, apart from the fact of its entirely ignoring the jolly time I spent as a Referendary (or official law-reporter), I can see no shame in all that."

were still sometimes apt to be overbearing and bumptious.

But long before his colleagues could quite agree as to the character of the strange new-comer, Bismarck had looked them through and through with a single glance. He had weighed them in the balance, and found most of them wanting. Pending his initiation into business he occupied himself in studying the diplomatists around him with "the calm of a naturalist," and before he had been a week in Frankfort, his Chief at Berlin (Herr von Manteuffel) was in possession of a gallery of portraits, male and female, from the pen of Herr von Bismarck, which might well excite the envy of the literary limner. Take, for example, the following sketch of the Austrians at the Diet, thrown off at a single sitting: *

Bismarck as a portrait-painter.

His Austrian colleagues.

"Count Thun has somewhat of a bumptious appearance, with a touch of the Vienna *roué* about him. But the sins which he commits in the latter capacity he tries to make up for in his own eyes, and in those of his Countess, by strictly observing the precepts of the Catholic Church. He plays hazard (macao) at the club till four in the morning, or dances from ten to five without ceasing, and with evident passion, drinking plenty of iced champagne all the while, and pays court to the pretty wives of the merchants with an ostentation that makes one believe he does so as much to make an impression on the spectators as to give himself pleasure. Under this exterior Count Thun conceals, I will not say high political energy and mental gifts, but an unusual degree of cleverness and calculation, that issue with great presence of mind from under the mask of harmless *bonhomie* as soon as politics come into question. I consider him an

* From his published despatches during the Frankfort period: "*Preussen im Bundestag*," &c., to be afterwards characterised. See p. 147.

opponent that might be dangerous to everybody who honestly trusts him, instead of paying him back in his own coin. If I may venture to give an opinion, in spite of the short experience I have had, it is that we must never expect from statesmen of the Schwarzenberg school" (of which Count Thun was the faithful exponent) "that they will accept or maintain justice as the basis of their policy for the sole reason that it is justice; their way of looking at things seems to me to be more that of a player who considers chances, and who in his manner of profiting by them administers at the same time to his vanity by cloaking himself with the pert and contemptuous carelessness of an elegant and *insouciant* cavalier. Of them one may say, with that slater who exclaimed in falling from the roof of a house: *Ça va bien, pourvu que cela dure.*'

"The second in command (at the Austrian embassy) is Baron Nell von Nellenburg. A clever publicist, as the saying is; he is nearly fifty, writes poetry occasionally, is sentimental, falls to weeping readily at the theatre, has an appearance of good nature and agreeableness, drinks more than he can stand, and is said to have had family misfortune.

"The *faiseur* proper of the embassy seems to be Baron Brenner, a tall, handsome man of about forty, who formerly, and till he was appointed here, is said to have had some influence in Italy in the shaping of Austrian policy there. He gives one the impression of being a man of considerable intellect and information; passes for an Ultramontane, which does not keep him from paying homage to the fair sex, and from descending in his endeavours in this respect to the middle ranks of society here. Towards gentlemen, as a class, as well as towards us, he preserves an aristocratic reserve."

But while, for the benefit of his official Chief at Berlin, Herr von Bismarck thus began his career at the Diet by hitting off his colleagues, and telling how they gambled and drank, philandered, intrigued, and danced,* he unbosomed himself to his intimate friends in a much

Diplomatic life at Frankfort.

* "Apart from Frau von Brint's *salon*, in which there is very high gambling every day, amongst the ladies also, society here did not give any

more general and out-spoken manner; and the peculiar merit of the following characterisation of diplomatic life at Frankfort arises from the fact that it was the result of only a few days' observation:—

"Frankfort is terribly dull," he wrote to his wife. "I have been so spoiled with so much affectation around me . . . . that I now see for the first time how ungrateful I have ever been to many people in Berlin; for, quite apart from you and yours, who are out of the question, even the cold measure of county and party leanings dealt out to me there is quite intimate friendship to what one meets here, which, summed up, is nothing other than mutual mistrust and espionage; and then if there was only anything to spy out and conceal! Nothing but miserable trifles do these people trouble themselves about; and the diplomatists here strike me as being infinitely more ridiculous with their important ponderosity concerning gathered rags of gossip than even a member of the Second Chamber in the full consciousness of his dignity. If foreign events do not occur, and these we superhumanly clever beings of the Bund can neither foretell nor direct, I know very well what we shall have arrived at in one, two, or five years' time, and am prepared to reach the same end in twenty-four hours, if only the others will be truthful and sensible for one single day. I never doubted that they all cook with water, but such plain, barefaced water-soup, without even the faintest trace of stock, astonishes me. Send the village clerk, or the

sign of life till last Friday, when there was a *fête* at Lord Cowley's" (afterwards ambassador at Paris) "in honour of Queen Victoria. The Dowager Duchess of Nassau (*née* Princess of Würtemberg) was there with her unmarried daughter; the latter danced with all the Powers represented here except us; she did not dance with a single Prussian." . . . "Diplomacy here is fond of a hop; not only Thun, but Tallenay (the French Envoy), who is more than fifty years old, and Count Briey, the representative of Belgium, and Lord Cowley himself, danced and took regular part in a cotillon which lasted two hours. The rooms were decorated very gaily with the flags of all the German States, and opposite the English arms, which were suspended from the wall in the form of a shield, were those of the German Confederation—the double-eagle without the crown."

toll-keeper, here; and, after they have been properly washed and combed, I will make a sensation with them amongst the diplomats. I am making giant strides in the art of saying nothing in a great many words. I write reports pages long, as rounded and polished as leading articles; and if Manteuffel (the Foreign Minister), after he has read them, can say what is in them, he can do more than I can. We all play at believing that each of us is crammed full of ideas and plans if he would only speak, and we are every one of us perfectly well aware that all of us together are not a hair better as to knowledge of what will become of Germany than Gossamer Summer. No one, not even the most malicious democrat, can form a conception of the charlatanism and self-importance of our assembled diplomacy."

To his political friend, Herr Wagener, editor of the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, he wrote also in a similar strain (5th June):—*

"It is incredibly dull here, the only man who pleases me being Schele, the Hanoverian member. Under the mask of a roystering sort of *bonhomie*, the Austrians intrigue, . . . and seek to play us out with the fiddle-faddle matters of form which have hitherto been our sole occupation. The men of the minor States are mostly mere caricatures of periwig diplomatists, who at once put on their official visage if I merely beg of them a light to my cigar, and who study their words and looks with Regensburg care when they ask for the key of the lavatory. . . . With us (Prussians) each man sings his own song, slanders the others, and writes special reports to Berlin. . . . But if ever I come to stand on my own legs here, I shall either cleanse my field of weeds or go home again more than suddenly."

Bismarck's relations to his chief.

It was not, indeed, long before he came to stand on his own legs at Frankfort. Though he had made his *début* there as first secretary to the Prussian representative in the Diet, it was well understood that this appointment was only

* "*Meine Memoiren*," &c., by Herr Wagener.

provisional, and that he would step into the shoes of his Chief as soon as the latter could be provided with a post better suited to his character. What was wanted of the Prussian member was energetic force of initiative, and power of coping with the passive resistance of Austria; and these essential qualities, wrote Bismarck himself with audacious freedom of his superior, General von Rochow did not possess. That the old General should receive with effusive warmth the secretary by whom he knew he was to be superseded, was not to be expected; but Bismarck seems to have credited him with more malice than he was really guilty of, and he repeatedly complained of being kept in the dark by his Chief in matters of business, "who thus deprives his 'diplomatic suckling,' as I have been called, of his proper nourishment." "About my Chief," wrote Bismarck to his friend Wagener, "I would rather not express myself in writing."

His chief's opinion of Bismarck.

But his Chief himself had no such scruples with respect to his secretary. For thus wrote General Rochow to Herr von Manteuffel of the man who was to succeed him, after at last he had been told of his own transference to St. Petersburg (5th July, 1851):—

"What in present circumstances were advantageous and possible for Germany, what can be achieved here in these respects, how the representatives of the Federal Sovereigns are to be severally treated, and what is required for maintaining Prussia's rights and interests, your Excellency has long since perceived. Decision and firmness of character, dignity and decorum in conduct, affability in social intercourse, a mature knowledge of human nature, prudence in language,

the gift of awakening confidence and of acquiring respect, as well as experience of business—such are the qualities pre-eminently necessary for this purpose. The distinguished man, whom the King's Majesty in his wisdom has thought fit to select from a number of true and devoted patriots for so thorny a task as awaits him here, possesses such conspicuous qualities of mind and character, with other paramount useful qualities and gifts seldom to be met with, as sufficiently make up for what, perhaps, he may otherwise want for the moment in experience. He is beyond question an ornament to Prussian chivalry, the pride of those patriotic spirits who work unceasingly with courage and devotion for the splendour of the Crown, and for the honour and safety of the Fatherland. I do not even hesitate to assert that such a person is in many respects too good for this post, in so far, namely, as such approved qualities seem more especially adapted for energetic, independent action, for a very high position in the Fatherland." . . .

A few days afterwards (11th July) General von Rochow gave an account of the introduction of Herr von Bismarck to the Prince of Prussia, who had just returned to his military governorship at Mayence from attending the opening of the first Grand Industrial Exhibition in London :—

Bismarck and the Prince of Prussia.

"His Royal Highness greeted Herr von Bismarck very kindly. As I was driving with him to his hôtel he asked me—'And is this lieutenant of the Landwehr really going to be our Envoy at the Diet?' 'Yes, indeed,' I replied, 'and I think the choice is a good one. Herr von Bismarck is fresh, strong, and will certainly be equal to all the claims your Royal Highness can make on him.' The Prince could say nothing to the contrary, and had in general a good opinion of this distinguished champion of justice and real Prussian feeling. I think His Royal Highness wishes Herr von Bismarck were only several years older and had grey hair, but whether one can carry out the requirements of the Prince with these precise attributes I will not venture to decide."

Herr von Bismarck may have previously come into formal contact with the Prince of Prussia; * but this may be regarded as the first real meeting between the two men who were destined to co-operate in doing such great things for their Fatherland. With a State servant of whom so favourable a certificate of character had been given him the Prince of Prussia did not hesitate to cultivate a closer acquaintance,† and he soon came to see that the young Landwehr (militia) lieutenant was a man far above the ordinary level; while the Prince, on the other hand, was very much more after Bismarck's own heart than his royal brother, to whose failings, in spite of the loyalty which had made him shed a roseate light on all the acts of the Crown, so keen a judge of character as he could not have been blind. The King was a sentimentalist, and that only; his brother was a soldier, and little more. Frederick William took counsel of poets, professors, and constitutional lawyers; while the Prince of Prussia consorted exclusively with generals, and thought of nothing but army reform. The elder brother devoted himself to the creation of an "evangelical bishopric" at Jerusalem; the younger to the formation of invincible battalions. Herr von Bismarck and the Prince of Prussia felt mutually drawn to each other; and between them there was now laid the foundation of that reciprocal attachment, that

* We saw, indeed, in our first chapter that young Bismarck was introduced to him at a State ball.

† In the year following their meeting at Frankfort the Prince of Prussia stood as sponsor to Bismarck's second son, Count William, commonly called Count "Bill."

unique relationship of master and man which achieved so much, and which neither time nor intrigue could ever shake.

About the time of his meeting with the Prince of Prussia, who was the man of the future, Bismarck also made the acquaintance of the statesman who was essentially the genius of the past. And who could this be but Metternich, whom the Germans, in their hatred of the old despot, had dubbed *Mitternacht?* But though now a waning luminary himself—natheless of the midnight kind—he kept a keen look-out for the rising lights of the new generation, and his wandering eye rested on the young Prussian diplomatist who had affected so warm a veneration for Austria, and who had first appeared upon the political stage as an ardent defender of the Prince's own maxim that "Sovereigns alone are entitled to guide the destinies of their peoples, and are responsible for their actions to none but God." So Prince Metternich invited Bismarck to his Rhenish château, and regaled his visitor no less with his oracular wisdom than with his delicious wines. On the Revolution, on the restoration of the Diet, on the future of Germany, did the old despot hold forth and was enchanted with his listener.

Bismarck meets Metternich.

"Humboldt," said Bismarck once, "took kindly to me as I was such a respectful listener, and thus I got a lot of things out of him. It was just the same with old Metternich, when I spent a couple of days with him once on the Johannisberg. Thun said to me, some time after, 'I don't know what glamour you have been casting over the old Prince, who has been looking down into you as if you were a

golden goblet, and who told me that he had no insight at all if you and I did not get on well together.' 'Well,' said I, 'I will tell you; I listened quietly to all his stories, merely jogging the bell every now and then till it rang again" (*i.e.*, suggesting fresh topics for his host to dilate upon). "That pleases these talkative old men." *

Bismarck and Metternich seated on the Johannisberg! In reading of this remarkable interview the mind involuntarily turns from the Rhine to the Jordan, when Elisha begged as a parting favour that a double portion of Elijah's spirit might be upon him, and was invested with the relinquished mantle of his apotheosized master's power and inspiration. Metternich had been the chief representative of the political system that was passing away, and from its ruins Bismarck was to be the creator of a new and better order of things. Both had similarly constituted minds, both the same political sympathies;

The Genius of the Past, and the Man of the Future.

* Dr. Busch. Of Bismarck's visit Princess Metternich wrote in her diary (August, 1851):—"The Prussian Envoy, Herr von Bismarck, who is going to take the place of General von Rochow at the Diet, spent a day with us. He had a long conversation with Clemens (the Prince), and seems to hold the best political principles. Consequently my husband has taken a great interest in him. He struck me as being an agreeable man, and exceedingly clever *überaus geistreich*)." *Metternich's Memoirs.*—"Two evenings ago," wrote Bismarck from Vienna, on 11th June, 1852, "I was with Prince Metternich. But his mental faculties, as well as his sight and hearing, have deteriorated greatly since last summer, unless, indeed, he is different in the morning from what he is at night. And his stories about the past have not always coherence and intelligible conclusion." And again, on 7th July, 1857: "Two days ago I went to see old Metternich on the Johannisberg. Physically I found him much altered since I saw him five years ago, but mentally little. He spoke almost wholly of long past times, the only present topic on which he launched out being a parallel between Kossuth and Mazzini, declaring the latter to be a fool, &c., and the former a great and highly dangerous 'Statesman of the Revolution.'"

but, while the despotism of Metternich was not even tempered by epigrams, Bismarck was gifted with a genius for combining absolutism with enlightenment, and for harmonising autocracy with universal suffrage. The former was mainly conservative, the latter could also be constructive. One aimed at saving the forms of the past by suppressing the ideas of the present; the other would seek to fit the expansive mind of the present into the scanty mould of the past. The past and the future met in the persons of these two men—the past which had belonged to Austria, the future which was the heritage of Prussia. They met and parted with mutual esteem, but yet their embrace was as the hand-shaking of two duellists before they take position. There is an apostolic succession in politics as well as in religion; but when the high priest of despotism, so to speak, laid his inducting hands on the rising hope of Crowns, he little dreamt that he was consecrating the founder of a heresy and a schism before which his own cherished system was doomed to fall.*

* It may not be amiss to quote here the opinion which Richard Cobden formed of Metternich, as the result of conversations he had with him in the course of a Continental tour. "He is probably," said the shrewd free-trader, "the last of those State physicians who, looking only to the symptoms of a nation, content themselves with superficial remedies from day to day, and never attempt to probe beneath the surface to discover the source of the evils which afflict the social system. This order of statesmen will pass away with him, because too much light has been shed upon the laboratory of Governments to allow them to impose upon mankind with the old formulas."—Morley's *Life of Cobden.* No criticism, in one respect, could better contrast Metternich with Bismarck, who, whatever points he may have in common with the Austrian autocrat, has never at least been guilty of empiricism.

Until the publication of the official despatches (to which we shall presently have to refer) written by Bismarck to his Government from the Diet, the best knowledge we had of his doings and sayings during the Frankfort period of his life (1851—1859) was furnished by his letters to his family, relatives, and others.* Characterised by a fertile flow of wit and satiric humour, of sentiment and fancy, as well as by great acuteness of observation and descriptive power, these charming letters—dashed off though they sometimes were while the writer was waiting for an audience or for a train—entitle him to rank high among the best masters of that epistolary art which is now said to be semi-obsolete.† In his official despatches we can clearly trace the course of his political thought and action; but his private letters are naturally a truer reflection of the man himself, as well as a more vivid and varied record of his journeyings and experiences during the Frankfort time. So, before proceeding to construct a diplomatic narrative from his official de-

Bismarck's early letters.

* The letters here quoted are translated from the third edition of the "*Originalbriefe Bismarcks an seine Gemahlin, seine Schwester und Andere* (1844–70)." These letters originally saw the light in the first considerable biography of the Prince (and in many respects the worst one) by Herr Hesekiel—a writer on the *Kreuz-Zeitung*—a book of which a very indifferent English translation (by Mr. Kenneth Mackenzie) appeared in 1870, before the great war.

† Commenting on the "Home Letters" written by the late Earl of Beaconsfield in 1830 and 1831, and published in 1885, a writer in the *Times* said: "Letter-writing is said to be a lost gift. The volume before us is proof that it has not been long lost, and that signs of its existence may turn up at any time, and from unexpected quarters."

spatches, let us put together a choice personal mosaic from his private letters.

A personal mosaic.

What between the duties of his office and the attractions of pleasure, of hunting, visiting, and the tourist's life, Herr von Bismarck was perpetually on the wing. Between Berlin and Frankfort alone in one year he travelled very nearly 3,000 miles. Fond of society, he could not always find congenial companions.

"I should like to have a horse," he wrote soon after arriving in Frankfort, "but do not care about riding alone, for that bores me, as does also the society of all the ——*ins* and ——*offs* that are here with the Princess Olga."

Sometimes he fell into a vein of philosophic or poetic sentiment:—

"The day before yesterday I dined with . . . . . at Wiesbaden, and with feelings of sadness, mingled with the wisdom of age, surveyed the scene of my youthful indiscretions. May it please God to fill this vessel, in which at that time the champagne of twenty-one bubbled over, leaving only worthless dregs behind, with his own clear and strong wine. Where and how are . . . . . and Miss . . . . . now living? How many are dead of those with whom I used to flirt, drink, or gamble? How many changes have my views of the world undergone in fourteen years, during which I ever held that which was actually present with me to be the only true form? How much now appears paltry, which then I thought great! How much I now hold in honour, at which then I scoffed! How many a leaf will sprout within us, cast its shadow, rustle, and then wither away, within the next fourteen years, until 1865, if, indeed, we ever live to see that year."

Again, about the same time (July, 1851):—

"On Saturday afternoon I drove over to Rüdesheim with Rochow and Lynar. There I took a boat, rowed down the Rhine, and

swam in the moonlight, with only my nose and eyes above the tepid water, as far as the Mäusethurm, near Bingen" (a very long swim by the way !), "where the wicked bishop came to an end. It is a delightfully dreamy sensation to lie on the water in the still warm night, lazily carried down by the stream, to gaze on the heavens glimmering with moon and stars, and to catch sight of wood-covered mountain tops, and castle battlements in the moonlight on each side, with nothing to listen to save the gentle plashing of one's own movement. I should like to have a swim like this every evening. Afterwards I drank some excellent wine, and sat with Lynar smoking on the balcony until late, the Rhine flowing beneath us. My small testament and the starry heavens brought us to discuss religion, and I argued for a long time against his theory of morals based on Rousseau, but my argument had no other effect than to reduce him to silence."

At one time we find him complaining that, instead of luxuriating in Nature and Beethoven, he

"must go and call on . . . . . and read endless figures about German steam corvettes and gun-boats, which lie rotting at Bremerhaven, and only eat up money;" while again he tells how, after working from eight to five, "I took a long and solitary walk among the mountains late in the wonderful moonlight night." From "a grand full-dress dinner in honour of the Emperor of Austria, at which 20,000 thalers' worth of gold-embroidered uniform sat down to table," he starts off on a trip to Heidelberg, whence "I walked to Wolfsbrunn, and drank some beer at the very table at which I once sat with you."

Moral temptations, no less than material troubles, sometimes assailed him on his travels.

"At Giessen" (he wrote to his wife from Halle, Jan., 1852) "I was put into a bitterly cold room, with three windows that would not shut, a bed too short and too narrow, dirty, bugs; disgraceful coffee, worse than I have ever tasted before. At Guntershausen some ladies got into the first-class smoking carriage—a fine

lady of quality . . . . . with two maids and sables ; she spoke alternately, German, with a Russian and English accent, very good French, and some English ; but, as a matter of fact, I think she came from Reezen Alley, Berlin, and that her companion was really her mother, or an old friend in the same line of business. . . . . I went into a second-class carriage to smoke, and there fell into the clutches of a colleague of mine from Berlin, a member of the Chamber and Privy-Councillor, who had been to Homburg for a fortnight to drink the waters. He badgered me so with questions before a lot of Jews from a fair, that I was glad enough to escape from him, and take refuge again with the Princess of Reezen Alley."

A few months afterwards he goes to Vienna (on official business), and longs for the society of his wife.

"I don't care for this place at all, although I enjoyed it so much with you in '47" (when he was on his wedding trip) ; "for not only do I miss your company, but I feel myself superfluous, and that is a more serious matter than I can make intelligible to your unpolitical mind. . . . . I have just come back from the opera with old Westmoreland, where a very good Italian company gave "Don Giovanni." . . . . Yesterday I was at Schönbrunn, and the tall hedges, with the white statues set amid the green bushes, reminded me of our exciting moonlight expedition. I saw the private little garden, where we first wandered ; it is especially forbidden ground, and the sentry, who still stands there, would not allow us even to look in."

"You see that I, too, am a dreamer over Nature's handiwork," he next wrote to his wife from Ofen, "where the Emperor (of Austria) has graciously assigned me quarters in his own castle, and I am sitting here in a large vaulted hall by the open window, through which I can hear the evening bells of Pesth pealing,"—sitting, penning a vivid description of the glorious landscape "dissolving into the purple evening haze," and longing "as if for one's sweetheart" for the appearance of his servant, "for I require a *clean shirt.*"

"There was a great crowd of travellers, but only think, not a single Englishman. I suppose the English have not yet discovered

Hungary. Otherwise there were strange vagabonds enough, from every nation, either east or west, some dirty, some clean. Where," he asks, in bidding his wife an epistolary good-night, "did I get the song from which has been running in my head the whole day—

'Over the blue mountains, over the white sea foam,
Come thou beloved one, come to thy lonely home.'

I can't think who it was that sang it to me in 'old lang syne.'"

A gay time he had at the Court of the young Emperor Francis Joseph (in June, 1852), of whom he "formed a very favourable impression," and graphic was his record of these festive, though official, days.*

"Once again the lights are shining up here from Pesth; the lightning flashes in the horizon towards the Theiss, but overhead it is starlight. . . . . After dinner the whole Court made an excursion to the mountains, to 'the beautiful shepherdess,' who has long been dead, as King Corvinus was in love with her some centuries back. The view over wooded hills to Ofen is like that on the banks of the Neckar. A country fair had gathered thousands together; they crowded round the Emperor, who mixed freely in the throng, with wild shouts of eljen (*evviva*); they danced the csardas, waltzed, sang, played, climbed trees, and mobbed the Court. A supper table for about twenty persons was laid on a grassy slope, with the seats only placed on one side, the other being left open for the view over wood, castle, town and country; overhead were lofty beech-trees, with Hungarians climbing in their branches. Immediately behind us was a closely-packed and pressing crowd, while at some distance we heard alternately the music of brass instruments and songs, wild gipsy melodies. The moon and the evening glow gave us light, while here and there torches flashed in the wood; the whole scene might serve unchanged as a grand tableau in a romantic opera. . . . . May angels guard you! A grenadier in a bearskin does this for me, six inches of whose bayonet I can see just over the window-sill, at a couple of arms' length from me, with a ray of light flashing on it. He is standing on the terrace over the Danube, and is doubtless thinking of his Nanny."

* He had been sent on a special mission to Vienna, of which more anon.

His love of adventure prompted him to make a flying visit into a remote and robber-infested part of Hungary (Szolnok), whence in the far distance he "could descry the faint blue outlines of the Carpathians." Under a broiling sun, which made his face "as red as a crayfish," he did ninety miles in twelve hours (including time required for changing teams), his means of conveyance being "a low peasant cart, filled with sacks of straw," drawn by three horses from the steppes; and thus, over an interminable turfy plain, level as the table, he

. . . . "flew at full speed, an amiable, sun-burnt officer sitting by my side, both of us having loaded pistols lying in the hay at our feet, and a company of lancers with cocked carbines riding behind us."

Bismarck wanted very much to have a brush with the mounted robbers, "as one has not the chance of this sort of thing in our dull part of the world;" but though at that time they had been playing the Dick Turpin extensively in the neighbourhood, they were careful to keep clear of the six-feet-two traveller from Pomerania, so that he lived to return to Pesth, where—

"I have had a swim in the Danube, seen the beautiful suspension bridge from beneath, made some calls, listened to some excellent gipsy music on the promenade, and shall soon go to bed."

In the summer of 1853 we find him enjoying the sea-bathing at Ostend, where "only the consciousness of a faultless figure can give us (men) the courage to appear in this costume before the whole world

of women." And then from Brussels he writes, full of enthusiasm for the sea:—

"I was very sorry to leave Ostend, and to-day feel a hankering after it. I met an old love of mine there. She was quite unchanged, and as charming as on the day when first I made her acquaintance. Just at this moment I feel the separation painful, and I look forward with impatience to meeting her again at Nordeney, when I can once more throw myself on her heaving breast. I can't understand why we don't always live by the sea, or why I allowed myself to be persuaded to spend two days in this rectilinear heap of stones, and to look at bull-fights, Waterloo, and pompous processions."

To the sea accordingly he returned, after a run to Amsterdam, which he contrasts with Venice, and a ramble through Holland with its quaint "towns, looking as if they had been cut out of old picture-books;" and

"when I listen to the chiming of the bells, and, with a long clay pipe in my mouth, look over the canals through the forest of masts on to the gables and chimneys in the background, which appear more quaint and fantastic than ever in the twilight, I think of all the Dutch fairy stories, from Dolph Heylinger and Rip Van Winkle down to the Flying Dutchman."

Having already visited England, France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Hungary, and Holland, he next proceeded to the touristic annexation of the Scandinavian States;* and in the autumn of 1857 we find him at

* In a despatch to Herr v. Manteuffel (his official chief at Berlin) from Frankfort, dated 3rd July, 1857, Bismarck said:—"Prince Frederick of Hesse has invited me to have a fortnight's shooting with him in the month of August; and as we shall have vacation then I should very much like to go. He told me that, apart from the Prince of Denmark, there would be present some political notabilities of the North, including Baron von Blixen and others, so that I should have ample opportunity of gathering information (on the subject of the Danish Question, &c.)"

Copenhagen taking the measure of the Danes. "I have just had a dip in the sea," he wrote to his wife on arriving there, "have lunched on lobster, and am to be at Court at half-past one." From Denmark, with a Court party, he passed over to Sweden, and got quartered

"in a white castle perched up on a peninsula, and surrounded by a huge lake. . . . . Broad Swedish is spoken under my window, and the sound of a grater like a saw comes up from the kitchen." "Imagine all this," he wrote after a graphic account of the scenery, "wonderfully shaped lakes, surrounded by heathland and forest of birch, juniper, fir, beech, and oak, and you have Småland, where I am staying at present. It is indeed the land of my dreams, unreachable by despatches, colleagues, and bores, unfortunately, also by you. I should very much like to have a little shooting box on the shore of one of these calm lakes, and to people it for some months with all the dear ones, whom I now imagine are gathered together in Reinfeld."

Splendid but fatiguing sport was enjoyed in these primeval hunting-grounds, which teemed with the flying and the running game, with the wolf and the boar, the roebuck and the red-deer, the blackcock, the wild duck, the partridge, and the capercailzie.

"We have been on the move from four in the morning until eight in the evening, shot four black-cocks, slept a couple of hours on cut heather, and are now off to bed, dead tired."

With the absorption of the true artist who fixes his attention more on his object than on his easel, Bismarck here had a severe fall :—

"The day before yesterday I looked more at my dog than at the ground I was going over, and in consequence fell and sprained my left leg." Being laid up by this accident, "I amused myself the

whole day by learning Danish of the doctor who makes my poultices. . . . . and now cripples of twenty years' standing have heard of this learned man and are coming here in the hope of getting cured by him."

From Sweden the unwearied Nimrod crossed the Baltic to Russia, and had some more sport of a splendid kind in Courland.

"I have had a very good time," he wrote, "the Tierra del Fuegans have displayed quite a touching amiability towards me, such as it would be very difficult for a stranger to match in another country. Besides several roebucks and fallow deer, I have brought down five elks, one of them a huge stag, who measured straight, not with a ribbon, 6 ft. 8 inches up to his withers, and on the top of that carried a colossal head. He fell over like a hare, but as he was not quite dead, I took pity on him and sent another shot into him. I had scarcely done this, when another, still larger than the first, came so close to me, that Engel, who was loading for me, had to take refuge behind a tree to avoid being run over, while I was obliged to content myself by giving him a friendly glance, as I had no more shot. I cannot forget this trouble, and so must pour out a complaint to you. Besides this, I just hit another, which they will probably find, and clean missed a third. So I might have shot three more. The evening of the day before yesterday, we started from Dondangen, and drove 200 miles without a road to Memel; through wood and waste, over stick and stone, in twenty-nine hours the carriage was open, and we had to hold on to save ourselves from falling out."

Sometimes, to his great regret, he had to forego the pleasure of shooting for the pain of writing, as for example:

"I have so much to write about Holstein, Mayence, the bridge at Kehl, and all kinds of tales in Berlin, that to-day and to-morrow I have to refuse excellent invitations to shoot red deer."

And sometimes the spirit of destructiveness within him was too strong to be resisted:

"I shoot a good deal. Such preserves! where a single gun kills from six to fifteen hares and a few pheasants, more rarely a roebuck or a fox, and whiles a bit of red deer flies in the far distance. I have managed to allow time for this by means of being very much lazier than I was last year, seeing that my industry has no results in Berlin."

Or again,

"I wanted to go fishing to-day (having sunk so low) with the Englishman" (Sir Alexander Malet,), "but it rained too hard, so instead of that I am the victim of visitors."

When no sport was to be had he took to climbing the mountains of the Taunus and the Odenwald, in order to counteract the effects of the high living at Frankfort, which frequently made him ill.

"At home," he wrote to Herr von Manteuffel (1856), "we are only so-so. My wife has been ill for weeks with a throat complaint; and I am beginning to feel the effects of my sedentary mode of life, and the Frankfort dinners, which open out to me the prospect of a visit to Karlsbad" (and its healing waters). "Besides which, the fact that I have got a grasping and quarrelsome tenant at Schönhausen, with no one there to look properly after my interests, materially contributes to the development of liver complaint."

But *à propos* of liver complaint and of the high living which induced it, let us complete this personal mosaic with the following story:

"Rothschild," said Bismarck once,* "used to give dinners sometimes which were quite worthy of his great riches. I remember once when the present King was in Frankfort I invited him to dinner. Later in the same day Rothschild also asked his Majesty to dine with him, to which the King replied that he must settle matters with me, seeing that for his own part he did not care with which of

* During the Franco-German War, as recorded by Dr. Busch.

us he dined. The Baron now came and proposed that I should cede his Royal Highness to him, and that I should join them at dinner. I refused this, but he had the *naïveté* to suggest that his dinner might be sent to my house, although he could not eat with us, as he only partook of strictly Jewish fare. This proposal also I begged leave to decline—naturally, though his dinner doubtless was better than mine."

Count Thun.

Bismarck, as we saw, had arrived at Frankfort in May, 1851, but it was August (27) of the same year before he was formally introduced to the Diet itself as representative of Prussia; and this is the account he gave, on the same day, of the bearing and manners of its Austrian President:—

"Count Thun displays in his conduct at meetings of the Diet the same non-observance of forms which generally characterises him. He presided in a short jacket of summer material, buttoned up to conceal the absence of a waistcoat; he had on an insignificant pretence at a necktie, and wore nankeen trousers; while his manner of delivery was that of conversation. In ordinary intercourse he has been very open and obliging to me since my appointment. That he over-estimates his position as President is an incorrect way of looking upon it on his part."

And again, a few days later:—

"The proceedings of the committee are less important in themselves (than the sittings of the Diet), and are a trial of patience, owing to the conduct of the Austrian member. Count Thun presides in most cases, and as he does not study beforehand the papers that are handed in, he only becomes acquainted with their contents by literally reading them to the committee from beginning to end; an operation which, in the case of some documents—as for instance a report on naval finance from thirty to forty pages long, full of figures and notes—lasts several hours, during which the Count recites with an enviable pair of lungs, while Herr von Schele goes to sleep, Herr von Nostitz reads a book under the table, and General Xylander,

who sits next to me, draws new and fantastic designs for gun-carriages on his blotting-paper. . . . I have represented to Count Thun the impossibility of this mode of carrying on business; but he only pretended in a real Austrian manner that he could not conceive what I was aiming at, and how it could be managed differently. . . . I must repeat the complaint I made in my last letter, that Count Thun endeavours to extend in an unjustifiable manner his authority as President. . . . Remonstrance only makes him rude. . . . He was so violent yesterday in the committee towards Herr von Schele, that the latter charged me to challenge him; but I preferred to act the mediator and to settle the matter peacefully, although a different issue would doubtless have been more piquant. In return for my first visit in May he only sent his card, and since then he has never been to my house, and has never returned my numerous visits, not even the official ones. When I go to him on business, he lets me wait in the ante-chamber only to tell me that he has just had a very interesting visit from an English newspaper-correspondent. Even to Herr von Rochow he did not behave differently; Wentzel tells me that he had once to sit in the ante-room twenty minutes with Rochow. He never rises from his seat to receive anybody, and never offers one a chair, whilst he himself remains sitting—smoking hard. I only tell your Excellency this to amuse you; I regard this rare specimen of a diplomatist with the calm of a naturalist, and flatter myself that I have contributed something towards his social polish, at least in his behaviour towards myself, without our mutual relations having lost their amicable and confidential character."

So this, then, was the means adopted by the Austrian President of the Diet to impress the new Prussian Envoy with the correctness of the theory with which he had come to Frankfort—the theory that his Sovereign was entitled to as much authority in Germany as the youthful Francis Joseph, and that there was to be perfect parity between the two leading German Powers. A pretty way of

Bismarck's cure for incivility.

showing that he also shared this theory was it for Count Thun to preside at the sittings of the Diet in something like dressing-room attire, to keep Herr von Bismarck waiting outside while he was gossiping with a newspaper-correspondent, never to rise from his seat or offer his visitor a chair, and to puff cigar smoke in his face without inviting him to share this amusement. But the next time that occurred, Bismarck pulled out a cigar himself and asked his dumbfounded colleague for a light, which caused the latter to reflect with whom he had to deal and to change his manners, so that before long Bismarck was able to report :—*

"I had a very open and frank personal explanation with Count Thun about a fortnight ago concerning the manner in which he throws obstacles in the way of my relations to him, by showing a want of regard and politeness towards me, and by refusing to apply to the machinery of our intercourse the oil of social forms. He bore with my outspokenness beyond my expectation, promising to remove the cause of my complaints, and since then everything has been better between us, and, as far at least as I am concerned, he now shows much more consideration."

* Once during the Franco-German war, Dr. Busch asked the Chancellor about "the famous cigar story." "Which do you mean?" said the Prince. "When, your Excellency, Rechberg kept on smoking a cigar in your presence, and you took one yourself." "You mean Thun. Well, that was simple enough. I went to him, and he was working and smoking at the same time. He begged me to wait a moment. I did wait; but when it seemed too long, and he offered me no cigar, I took out one, and asked him for a light, which he gave me with a rather astonished look. But there is another story of the same kind. At the sittings of the military committee when Rochow was the Prussian representative at the Diet, Austria alone smoked. Rochow, who was a furious smoker, would certainly have liked to do it, but did not venture. When I succeeded him, I too hankered after a cigar; and as I did not see why I should not have it, I asked the Power in the President's chair to give me a light, which seemed to cause him and the other gentlemen both astonishment and

Such, then, was the beginning of that conflict between Austria and Prussia which only ended at Sadowa. At first more personal than otherwise, it was not long in growing purely political. The pretensions of Austria were well reflected in the contemptuous and cavalierly manner in which her representatives affected to treat the Prussian Envoy, and his feeling of resentment quickened his suspicion of the political meaning behind it all. Indeed, he had not been long in Frankfort before he began to doubt that he would ever succeed in realising the object of his mission, which was to invest Prussia with as much influence over the affairs of Germany as was exercised by her rival. Prussia had only assented to the resuscitation of the Diet on the understanding that its organisation would be re-modelled in such a way as to place her on a footing of equality, at least, with Austria; but Austria was privately determined to

Austria and Prussia.

displeasure. It was evidently an event for them. That time only Austria and Prussia smoked. But the other gentlemen obviously thought the matter so serious that they reported it to their respective Courts. The question required mature deliberation, and for half a year only the two Great Powers smoked. Then Schrenck, the Bavarian Envoy, asserted the dignity of his position by smoking. Nostitz, the Saxon, had certainly also a great wish to do so, but had not received authority from his Minister. When, however, he saw Bothmer, the Hanoverian, indulging himself at the next sitting, he must—for he was intensely Austrian, having sons in the army—have come to some understanding with Rechberg, for he also took out a cigar from his case and puffed away. Only Würtemberg and Darmstadt were left, and they did not smoke themselves. But the honour and dignity of their States imperatively required it, so that the next time we met Würtemberg produced a cigar—I see it now, it was a long, thin, light yellow thing—and smoked at least half of it as a burnt-offering to the Fatherland."—"*Bismarck in the Franco-German War.*"

achieve a predominance in the councils of the Fatherland, and Bismarck was not slow in finding that out.

Reference has frequently been made to his "youthful illusions" with respect to Austria, but we have seen nothing to convince us that his self-deception on this score was very gross.* He had defended Olmütz, it is true, but only from motives of immediate policy, and with a secret resolution to "eat the dish of his revenge cold instead of hot." Certainly, at least, his "illusions" never went so far as to content him with the prospect of his country remaining in a state of permanent vassalage to Austria. There is not a syllable in all his Frankfort despatches which were subsequently given to the world to show that. These remarkable despatches form an authentic history of most of the questions which then vexed the German mind; they mark the progress of the change by which Bismarck, from being the submissive party to a marriage of convenience —from which, however, he did his best to draw domestic happiness—became the emphatic advocate of divorce; and they show the clear beginning of that masterly policy which has rapidly converted Germany from a geographical expression, a bundle of conflicting States tied together with red tape, into one of the stablest,

* "On coming here four years ago," wrote Bismarck in 1855, "I certainly was no opponent of Austria in principle, but I should have had to disavow every drop of my Prussian blood had I wished to preserve anything even like a moderate predilection for Austria as understood by her present rulers."

most formidable, and most respected empires of modern times.*

* Consisting of four octavo volumes, these Bismarck despatches were published—three of them in 1882, and the fourth in 1884—under the title: "*Preussen im Bundestag*, 1851 *bis* 1859: *Documente der K. Preuss. Bundestags-Gesandschaft, herausgegeben von Dr. Ritter von Poschinger, veranlasst und unterstützt durch die K. Archiv-Verwaltung; Leipzig, Verlag von S. Hirzel*"—*i.e.*, "Prussia in the Federal Diet, from 1851 to 1859: being Documents of the Royal Prussian Mission at the Diet, edited by Dr. Chevalier von Poschinger, suggested and supported by the Administrators of the Royal Archives; published at Leipzig by S. Hirzel." The editor, a young Bavarian gentleman engaged in the Imperial Ministry of the Interior, has done his work with exemplary skill; but with the national archives at his command it would, indeed, have been strange if he had not achieved pre-eminence in a field of labour wherein the Germans, more than any other nation, are fitted by nature to excel. As to the exact motives which prompted the publication of these despatches during the life of their author, the Opposition prints would at first have it that it was deemed expedient to counteract the evil effects produced on public opinion by the Chancellor's defeats in the field of domestic policy by directing attention to the proofs of his brilliant genius as a diplomatist. But there is no reason to doubt that the truth about their divulgence was told by Professor von Sybel, Keeper of the Prussian State Archives, who thus wrote in the "*Historische Zeitschrift*" (No. 1, of 50 vol.): "The much-discussed question of how these despatches came to be published may once for all be answered. While collecting material for his book on the banking institutions of Prussia, Herr von Poschinger had received permission to look into the documents of the Diet deposited in the secret State Archives at Berlin. Here he found the reports of Herr von Bismarck, recognised their great historical importance, and came to ask me, as Keeper of the Archives, whether he might use those despatches in the compilation of a book on 'Bismarck in Frankfort.' Thereupon I suggested to him that, instead of doing that, he should edit the documents themselves, and, on his agreeing to this, I begged the Prince-Chancellor's approval of this plan, which was at once accorded." These Bismarck despatches form one of a numerous and valuable series of historical works compiled from the Prussian State Archives, and published under the superintendence of their keeper, the eminent scholar, Professor von Sybel. At first there was no slight fear and trembling at Vienna when it became known there that another Dr. Busch, of a diplomatic kind, was in the field; but the unruffled composure with which his revelations were received even there was a proof how quickly in these necessitous days the memory of defeat gives place to feelings of political expediency, and how implacable enmity may be soon succeeded by brotherly alliance.

Bismarck's Frankfort despatches.

Diplomatic literature is not, as a rule, very interesting to the general reader; but in most of these Bismarck despatches there is an inherent charm which invites perusal, even when the subject-matter itself, as frequently happens, is detestably dry. For they are full of keen observation of the world, of quaint and original expression, of strong common sense, of racy humour, of sharp but good-natured satire, of trenchant wit and masculine logic, and exhibit all the qualities of a massive and comprehensive mind. Their author is equally master of the familiar but forcible style of Lord Palmerston, of the terse and pithy narrative powers of the Duke of Wellington, and of the literary strength and sweep of the Marquis of Salisbury.* These despatches are perfect models of reporting. Of all ambassadors, Americans are probably the best. With them, too, diplomacy is a profession, but not one that requires any preliminary training and outfit beyond the possession of an educated, open mind (with manners, if possible, in accordance), and a seeing eye. Their idea of the representative, or honourable-spy function, is the true one, as any one may convince himself by turning up a volume of their "Foreign Relations." Nothing is too small for them to make a note of. Nothing escapes their observation, and whatever they observe they report. But no Minister of the United States ever used his eyes and ears more vigilantly,

* In the Prussian Chamber, soon after their publication, Professor von Sybel pronounced these despatches of Bismarck to possess "a classic worth unsurpassed by the best German prose-writers of any age."

or reported more faithfully what he saw and heard, than did Herr von Bismarck at the Diet. He was thorough. No newspaper-correspondent could possibly have held the candle to him. He was the greatest tell-tale in Frankfort. Everything went to Berlin—from the ferreting out of the author of some obnoxious article to the denunciation of persons of doubtful antecedents, and of a Government which had converted a cobbler into a full-blown diplomatist.* Penetrating observations on the state of the democratic movement, interesting news items from the neighbouring Courts, the denunciation of blasphemous publications, anecdotes of distinguished persons, records of travel and of social adventure, sage

* In one despatch he says that a diplomatic appointment in Frankfort had just been conferred on "a person of very doubtful antecedents." According to rumours current at the time, the objectionable person was originally a shoemaker's apprentice. A well-off elderly lady had "taken notice of him," had caused him to be educated at her expense, had purchased for him the title of *Freiherr*, and had then married him. The Government of the country in which the happy pair lived, in order to procure decorations for the transformed shoemaker, had sent him repeatedly to other Courts with congratulatory messages, and on these occasions articles written by himself had appeared in the newspapers describing his conversations with "the most eminent diplomatists of the Great Powers." "If now," says Herr von Bismarck, "a useless post has been granted to an individual of this kind for no other purpose than to force for him an entrance (which he has hitherto sought in vain) into good society, his appointment is an abuse of sovereignty which cannot but have evil consequences" Herr von Bismarck had little doubt that the Government in question was capable of such proceedings, for he had heard that it had "an open shop for patents of nobility," at which titles were sold for fixed prices to any one who chose to apply for them. He thought it very probable, therefore, that "a similar traffic in diplomatic appointments had been established." In consequence of these representations the Prussian Prime Minister (Manteuffel) attempted to stop the abuse complained of; and his advice to Bismarck on the subject was that the diplomatic corps should combine to "cut" the upstart complained of.

reflections on the relations between Church and State—such is the kaleidoscopic picture presented by these Bismarck despatches.

The Pope and the Devil.

By some writers, who ought to have known better, it has been asserted that Bismarck, unhappy, like Alexander, at having no more foes to fight, created Ultramontanism for the simple purpose of opposing it; but those who read his Frankfort reports on the Church-conflict in Baden (1853) will find already a full and clear expression of those principles in defence of which he was compelled to take up the Papal gauntlet twenty years later. Anxious even then to see the power of the Pope in Germany confined within proper limits, Bismarck was equally zealous in his endeavour to impose restraints upon the Devil in certain fields of his activity; and with this in view (December, 1854) he moved the Diet to abolish and forbid all public gambling-tables in the Fatherland. To be sure, it took some considerable time before each of these foreign potentates was assigned his present share of diminished influence on the affairs of Germany; but still it is always interesting to trace the beginning of great changes.

Schwarzenberg.

With Bismarck the characteristics of the diplomatist were generally lost in those of the man. In April, 1852, Prince Schwarzenberg died—the man who had threatened to "abase Prussia, and then abolish her," and Bismarck was asked to attend a mass for the soul of the deceased.

But this, he thought, was asking a little too much of him.*

During his Parliamentary career he had always strenuously argued that bounds should be set to the freedom of the Press, and at Frankfort he acted on his convictions. A democratic print had compared the black-red-and-gold banner on the palace of the Diet to a "virgin-wreath over a house of ill-fame." Unfortunately for this ribald journal the honour of the body against which it never ceased to rail was in the temporary keeping of its Prussian Vice-President, who promptly informed the civic authorities that if they would not, within a stated interval, guarantee the Diet against the recurrence of such insults, he would be compelled to take his own measures. Meanwhile he asked the commander of a Prussian regiment, forming part of the garrison, what he would do if required to arrest the offending editor and possess his premises. The colonel replied that, at a word from the Prussian Envoy, he was prepared to seize, not only the foul-penned democrat himself, but also the whole stiff-necked Senate of the Free City of Frankfort. But to this length it was unnecessary to go; for at the instance of the Senate, which hastened to comply with the imperious demands of a man whom they knew to be terribly in earnest, the scurrilous newspaper was at once extinguished. At the same time its editor was soundly

A ribald print.

* "The English Envoy (Lord Cowley) was very much struck on my communicating the news to him, and he then said, '*Au fond c'est un bonheur*,'" to which Bismarck doubtless replied with a deep "Amen."

belaboured in his own house by two mysterious messengers of vengeance, whose employer it was impossible to discover.

But then the police of Frankfort were a shockingly supine and corrupt body. For do we not find Bismarck himself bitterly complaining of the perils and nuisances to which passengers in the streets of this free and ancient city were continually exposed? He himself, though not, it would seem, from any personal unpopularity, had been repeatedly pelted with stones, while his wife's bonnet had suffered from a brick-bat in broad daylight; and, as illustrating the character of the men who were paid to guard the public from such outrages, he instanced the case of a gendarme who had made himself the recipient of two hundred articles stolen from his house by a servant-girl, who deemed this the easiest way of accumulating an outfit prior to making off to America with her policeman-lover. That for this crime the man was only dismissed the force, and the maid let off with a fortnight in gaol, seemed to Bismarck a most scandalous and intolerable miscarriage of justice worth the notice of his Government.

The police of Frankfort and Berlin.

It would have been well, he doubtless thought, if the police of Frankfort had shared a little more of that spirit which animated the force at Berlin to an intolerable degree. An English Captain Yates, when passing through Frankfort (July, 1855), had complained to Sir Alexander Malet (the British Envoy there) of the extreme masterfulness of the Berlin

police; and Bismarck wrote with reference to the story:

"I am not sufficiently informed about the incident to distinguish what is true from what is false; but the complaints of all travellers agree in calling the Berlin police the rudest in Europe, and in asserting that in their arrogant treatment of individuals, as well as in their neglect of the forms of civility in general, they excel even the French *mouchard*. My own experience does not allow me to contradict such complaints. The tone of our policemen towards strangers is unnecessarily harsh, and the constables hanging about the streets of Berlin exercise their control of the public to the extent of determining the height to which respectable ladies shall lift their dresses in rainy weather, and the position in which one shall sit while driving in a cab. Petty despotism of this sort is often a much more serious cause of political disaffection than difference of opinion as to forms of government or budget-rights. But in the subaltern portion of our State-servants there is rooted, with indestructible firmness, a tendency to be overbearing and rude."

In addition to his diplomatic office at Frankfort, Bismarck had been specially entrusted with the management of the Prussian Press Bureau there, an intricate piece of machinery for converting the journalism of that day, such as it was, to the aims and purposes of his Government. The Austrians, on their part, were not without an organisation of a similar kind, and thus the rivalry of the leading members of the Diet was reflected in the Press by hireling scribes, who stabbed like masked assassins and mined like moles. By a lucky chance—it was in the spring of 1854—Bismarck acquired possession of the key to the enemy's fortress in the shape of an old desk which had been sold by Baron von Prokesch, his

A Press feud.

Austrian colleague. In the pigeon-holes of this secretaire was found a mass of correspondence between its previous owner and his secret newspaper-agents with respect to an anti-Prussian manipulation of the German Press, together with the drafts of vehement articles whose authors had hitherto been sought for in the democratic camp, and which, though containing personal insults to the King of Prussia, had appeared when Baron Prokesch was accredited at Berlin. Another man would have probably used the discovery as a means of procuring the immediate recall of the Austrian plotter. Bismarck sagaciously advised his Government only to publish so much of its information as would inspire Prokesch with a feeling of harrowing insecurity, and make the other States admire the patience and long-suffering of Prussia. Better an awkward foe, he wisely thought, than a dissembling friend. The representative of Austria intrigued with the craft of an Iago, but he was met with a subtlety of counterplot unsurpassed by the conceptions of the poet who penned the "Conspiracy of Fiesco."

One dreadful grievance with Bismarck was the persistent practice of opening his letters and despatches in which the foes of Prussia indulged.

"Do not forget when you write to me," was the caution he gave his wife, "that your letters are not only read by me, but by all sorts of post-office spies."

And again:

"As to politics and people I cannot write much, as most of the letters are opened here." "I am uneasy about the fate of a very

confidential communication I sent you lately," he tells his friend Wagener; "three of my letters to my wife have gone a-missing; if damaged in the opening they are coolly destroyed."

Letter-opening and its consequences.

"I hope your wife will excuse me," he adds in a postscript to Herr von Manteuffel, "if I send this despatch addressed externally to her, so as to obviate the chance of its being officially opened." . . . "If the . . . or others are enabled to sow mistrust in our camp, they will have gained thereby the chief purpose of their letter-pilfering."

Continuing for years, this annoying system of espionage, combined with other postal abuses, at last (in 1858) induced Bismarck to take the initiative in an attempt to wrest from the princely house of Thurn-and-Taxis the letter-carrying monopoly which it had enjoyed for centuries. But this assault of his on a private privilege, which had proved itself to be no longer compatible with the public interest, was frustrated no less by the opposition of Austria than by the apathy of his own Government; and it was not till 1866, on the establishment of the North German Confederation, that he succeeded in transforming the Thurn-and-Taxis post-office into a State institution.

A gallery of diplomatic portraits.

But of all his despatches written during his stay at Frankfort certainly the most interesting to the general student is a sort of inventory of the characters of all his colleagues in the Diet. These personal sketches read like pages from Theophrastus or La Bruyère, and prove that their author had the choice of becoming great in politics or in literature. As serving to denote the human element in which Bismarck then lived and moved, we may be excused for

projecting on our canvas, in his own colours, the mere heads of his Frankfort companions, while regretting that we have no room for their marvellously well-drawn full figures.

Herr von Prokesch,* presiding member of the Diet for Austria (in 1853), is first put on the pillory :

"The easy calmness with which he advances falsehoods or contests the truth even exceeds my pretty high expectations in this respect; and add to this a surprising degree of coolness in dropping a subject or changing front, as soon as the falsity of his premises is proved to him beyond all quibble. If need be, he will cover his retreat in such a case by an outburst of moral indignation or by a very personal attack, with which he transfers the discussion to a new and totally different field. His chief weapons in the petty warfare which I am obliged to wage with him whenever our interests diverge are—passive resistance, which often imposes on me the *rôle* of an importunate dun, and the *fait accompli* of presidential encroachments, apparently trifling in themselves, which are generally made in such a manner that remonstrance on my part must look like quarrelsome and hair-splitting criticism. . . . It was only the other day I was obliged to take him to task for raising a loan of 87,000 florins on his own responsibility for fortification expenses, on which occasion he appealed to 'hundreds' of precedents (of a like kind), though he could not name me a single one of them. He then declared that a certain discretionary power for the carrying on of business was indispensable to the President; that formerly no one would have dared to make a noise about such trifles; and that it could not possibly conduce to the maintenance of a good understanding between us and Austria if every action of the President were to be thus exposed to malevolent criticism on the part of the Prussian member. . . . He was sure the Diet would not seek to disavow his act; but should it do so, he was prepared to pay the 'trifling interest on the loan out of his own pocket.' I replied that the latter course seemed to me a

* We have already presented our readers with Bismarck's portrait of Count Thun, the predecessor of Prokesch. See p. 122, *ante*.

happy one, and the only proper solution of the difficulty that had arisen. . . ."*

The Bavarian member, Herr von Schrenck, was by Bismarck accounted to be one of the best elements in the Diet, both in point of character and accomplishments.

"A thorough and diligent worker, he is practical in his views and judgments, though sometimes a little dogmatic from his legal education. . . . Officially, he is open and complaisant as long as his high-strung and excitable national feelings are spared—a weakness to which I strive to be particularly considerate. . . ."

"My Saxon colleague, Herr von Nostitz, inspires me with less confidence, believing as I do—though I should be glad if I read him wrongly—that, on the whole, personal interests are more with him than political ones. . . . His political conduct is determined by the wish to retain his official post here (from various domestic and pecuniary motives), and certainly, considering the present tendency of the Saxon Government, Austria has much more cause to fortify him in his position than Prussia. . . . With his great power of

* Once during the Franco-German war Bismarck said :—"No Austrian diplomatist of the school of that day troubled himself very much about the exact truth. Prokesch was not at all the man for me. He had brought with him from the East the trick of the most miserable intrigues. Truth was a matter of absolute indifference to him. I remember once, in a large company, there was some talk of an Austrian assertion which did not square with the truth. Prokesch raised his voice and said, so that I should hear him distinctly, 'If that were not true I should have been *lying* (and he emphasised the word) in the name of the Imperial-Royal Government.' He looked me straight in the face. I returned the look, and said, quietly, 'Quite so, your Excellency.' He was obviously shocked; but when on looking round he perceived nothing but down-dropped eyes and solemn silence, which meant to say that I was in the right, he turned on his heel and went into the dining-room where covers were laid. After dinner he had recovered himself, and came across to me with a full glass, for otherwise I should have supposed that he was going to call me out. He said, 'Come now; let us make friends.' 'Why not?' said I; 'but the protocol must *of course* be altered.' 'You are incorrigible,' he replied, smiling. It was all right. The protocol *was* altered, so that they recognised that it had contained an untruth."—"*Bismarck in the Franco-German War.*"

work, intelligence, and long experience, he is the most effective supporter of all that Austria tries to achieve in the Diet."

Bismarck regretted that the Diet was likely to lose Herr von Bothmer, for Hanover,

"who has not only a straightforward and prepossessing character, but is also the only one of my colleagues who has independence enough to give me more than passive assistance when I have to expostulate with the (Austrian) President."

A very different stamp of man was the Würtemberg Envoy, Herr von Reinhard, who was as "superficial and confused" as Herr von Bothmer was clear and thorough. Either from personal pique, or "a tendency to concern himself more with insane theory than sober practice," he cherished a deep and bitter dislike of Prussia, going even far beyond the instructions of his Court in this respect. He always came late to the sittings of the Diet, and by his inattention and stupidity occasioned immense waste of time.

The Baden colleague of this perverse character, Herr von Marschall, was "not without understanding and business capacity," but he had an inveterate tendency to "disclaim all responsibility for an independent judgment," and to attempt to sit on two chairs at the same time—a man of whom Bismarck had not much to expect.

The representative of Kur-Hesse, Herr von Trott, impressed Bismarck more as a bluff and jovial hunting squire than as an ambassador. Whenever he came to the sittings, and that he did as rarely as possible, he voted straight off according to his instructions, which had generally been dictated by Austria.

A more hostile element than this good-natured Nimrod was to be found in Freiherr von Münch-Bellinghausen, the member for Ducal Hesse, whose Catholic sentiments made him a steady opponent of Prussia, "though without any discernible tendency to insincerity and intrigue beyond the bounds of the anti-Prussian policy prescribed to him by his Government." That a Protestant Sovereign in conflict with his Catholic bishops should make such a man his representative, seemed to Bismarck anomalous.

"One of the cleverest and most impartial heads in the Diet is Herr von Bülow, representing Denmark (for the Elbe Duchies)," on whom, as on all who ever struck him for their ability, Bismarck, be it remarked in passing, continued to keep an eye, and in after years made him Chief of the Foreign Office, in which capacity he was one of the German Plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Berlin.

"To our truest allies belongs Herr Von Scherff" (Envoy of the King of the Netherlands for Luxemburg)—"an experienced and painfully conscientious man of business, and of great assistance to me, especially outside the Diet."

"Of his neighbour, Freiherr von Fritsch (for the Ducal-Saxon Sovereigns), I have nothing to wish, except that his power to support our Prussian policy might equal his will." . . .

"Nassau and Brunswick are represented by Freiherr von Dungern, an inoffensive character who neither by personal talents nor political weight exercises any influence on the Diet," and who, for the rest, exemplified the saying that no man can serve two masters. His

family and other relations generally inclined him to favour Austria, who controlled the neighbouring Court of Nassau; and as for poor Brunswick, the little he did for it was scarcely to be regarded, in the opinion of Bismarck, as an equivalent for his salary.

Of the Mecklenburg member, Herr von Oertzen, Bismarck had a high opinion, and could always count upon his openness and honesty, as, like himself, he had gradually been weaned from his sympathies for Austria.

The representative of Oldenburg, Anhalt, and Schwarzburg, was Herr von Eisendecher, "a kindly man of wit and lively conversation," who advocated the development of the Diet into a strong central power as compensation for the failure of Prussia's efforts to achieve national unity, of which he had previously been a warm supporter.

A very singular and high-prancing person in the eyes of Bismarck was Freiherr von Holzhausen—the member for half-a-dozen insignificant States, a moneyed worldling of an old patrician race in Frankfort, his head turned with the title of Privy Councillor, his portly body blazing with several grand crosses, and his vaulting imagination full of family pride and the faded glories of the Holy Roman Empire. To this extraordinary man the whole policy of Prussia seemed nothing but "revolutionary usurpation" which he took every means to oppose, being equally ready to act, with or without instructions, in the most unscrupulous and high-handed way. Bismarck suspected that the motive for his

conduct was to be found in a terribly strong hankering after another Imperial order, and for the elevation of his family to the rank of Austrian Counts.

Such, then, was the human environment in which Bismarck more immediately moved; such were the men with whom he primarily had to cope. The rest of his companions were chiefly members of the foreign Diplomatic Body, and most of their characters, too, are graphically hit off here and there throughout these despatches. Take, for example, the following sketch of the French Ambassador (in 1856) :—

Count Montessuy.

"My French colleague, Count Montessuy, attaches on the whole too much importance to the Press, and extracts therefrom much untrustworthy matter for his reports, having no proper conception of the ways and character of our German newspaper-men. He continues to report with unabated zeal, and is to some extent feared by my German colleagues, at whose mysterious self-importance he runs amuck with direct questionings and inquisitorial endeavours to get at what passed in our sittings. Socially he has not succeeded in making a good position for himself here, for which his wife is chiefly to blame. For by the 'federal ladies' she is not found polite enough for them to pardon her pretensions and her diamonds, while her invitations are the germ of fresh bickerings, seeing that in the selection and seating of her guests she takes not into account the manifold cliffs of rank and other claims existing here. Some of the federal envoys, indeed, do not go any more to Montessuy's. But I belong to the few who stand well with both man and wife, and my only objection to their house is that there is bad eating and worse drinking in it—which I, however, with my accustomed devotion to the royal service, bear without grumbling, as Montessuy is otherwise a pleasant colleague for me."

Bismarck also saw much of Prince Gortchakoff who, in addition to representing the Czar at Stuttgart, was

accredited to the Germanic Diet. It has been truly said of the Russian diplomatist that he began by being Prince Bismarck's patron, that he gradually became Prince Bismarck's dupe, and that he ended by being Prince Bismarck's overmatched antagonist. We shall afterwards have occasion to see how the master was outstripped by his pupil, but meanwhile we may note that, even in the Frankfort days, Gortchakoff had begun to develop that fatal tendency to pose as the *Deus ex machinâ* in diplomatic quarrels to which he finally owed his fall:—

Prince Gortchakoff.

"I may mention as a curiosity," wrote Bismarck (April, 1852), "that when Prince Gortchakoff was here two months ago, he affected to have brought about by his personal mediation a complete reconciliation between Prussia and Austria—though not so much, as he said, by his own merit as from the circumstance of his being '*le faible écho de la voix de l'Empereur.*' But, as a matter of fact, we had already settled our differences with Austria" (for the time being) "before his arrival here."

But of all his foreign colleagues, Bismarck lived on terms of greatest intimacy with Sir Alexander Malet, representing England, whom he sincerely admired and respected. The honest, simple, straightforward character of Sir Alexander pleased him, and they hunted, travelled, and lived much together. Official tension could not disturb their private friendship, and the latter was severely tested by a misunderstanding which had arisen about the claims of an English nobleman (the Earl of Bentinck) to a property in Oldenburg—of no human interest now to any one, even of the Dryasdust class. Suffice it to say that the English Government espoused

the cause of the peer, and made a representation on the subject to the Diet, or rather to its Austrian President. Bismarck at first opposed the discussion of the matter, less from reasons of substance than of form, being determined to set his face against the fiction—cherished, among others, by the misapprehending powers of Downing Street—that the Diplomatic Body were bound to confine their business relations with the Diet to its President, a fiction which Austria industriously used as an additional weapon against her Prussian rival. A correspondence on the subject took place between the Cabinets of London and Berlin, the result being that Lord Clarendon conveyed to Bismarck his thanks for the clearer insight the latter had given as to the constitution of the Diet, and instructed Sir Alexander Malet to act henceforth in conformity with the principles laid down by his Prussian colleague. What directly led to this correspondence was a complaint by Lord Bloomfield at Berlin—quite groundless, as it turned out—that in the affair Bismarck had shown great hostility to England.

"I am really at a loss to know," wrote Bismarck (January, 1858) to Baron Manteuffel in self-justification, "what could have induced me to act as I am said to have done, seeing that not only with both the Bentincks, but also with Sir Alexander Malet, I have always been on the best footing, and seeing also that in general, as your Excellency knows, my sympathies for England are livelier than for any other country after my own."*

In dealing with things Bismarck's main strength

* See p. 207, *post.*

has ever been his consummate knowledge of men, and before accepting his post at Frankfort he had stipulated with the King to grant him opportunity of visiting all the chief German Courts in order that he might become acquainted with the leading personalities at them.* Darmstadt was one of the capitals to which the pursuit of this systematic study of character frequently took him, and he once related † that he had reason to suppose he was not a favourite with the Grand Duchess Mathilda, who said of him to some one: "He is always there, and looks as if he were as big a man as the Grand Duke himself." But, indeed, he once had an opportunity of proving himself to be a much bigger man than His Highness, and the incident is worth referring to as illustrating the petty spites and jealousies which then dominated the minor Courts, as well as the bold and masterful character of the man who was now in training to cleanse the Augean stable of German diplomacy.

Bismarck a bigger man than a Grand Duke.

Herr von Dalwigk, the Grand Duke of Hesse's Prime Minister, was an inveterate foe of Prussia, and lost no opportunity of testifying his hatred of that Power. Now, for some reason or other, the Prussian Minister at Darmstadt, Baron Canitz, proved a thorn in the flesh of Herr von Dalwigk; and the King of Prussia was one day surprised with a demand for the recall of his repre-

Bismarck and Herr von Dalwigk.

* "Recollections of my Life," by Herr von Unruh (to whom Bismarck related this fact), in the *Deutsche Revue* for October, 1881.

† Dr. Busch.

sentative. Canitz, said Dalwigk, had spoken to him in a too inquisitive and insulting manner, and honour therefore required that he should be dismissed from his post. Bismarck was all the more astounded at this request as knowing Baron Canitz to be a man of polished manners and "scrupulous veracity," and as being morally convinced that Dalwigk's charges against him were a pure fabrication.

"If therefore," he wrote, "I may take the liberty of roundly expressing my opinion in the matter, I would respond to the audacious assumption of Herr von Dalwigk, that he can procure the recall of a Prussian agent at his *bon plaisir*, with the emphatic declaration that there is altogether no prospect of prosperous diplomatic intercourse between Prussia and Darmstadt as long as Herr von Dalwigk remains at the head of the Ministry. I am sure that we should carry our point, and our stocks would thus experience a considerable rise. For in all duty and conscience I can assure you that, if Herr von Dalwigk cannot get along with Canitz, he could only do so with a representative of Prussia more devoted to the service of Hesse than to ours. I am all the more ardent in espousing his cause, as having always encouraged Canitz to be more energetic and less accommodating in his behaviour towards Herr von Dalwigk than his kindly, quiet, and courteous manners would naturally incline him to be."

Bismarck was charmed with the opportunity which had thus unexpectedly presented itself of pushing Dalwigk from a position which he had used to the detriment of Prussia, but he was too wary to demand his summary dismissal from office. Such a request, he argued, would only have the effect of making his Grand-Ducal master "sulk" and grow surly. A much more convenient way, he said, of abolishing Dalwigk (whom he characterised

"Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin!"

as a "base Rhine-Confederationist")* would be to comply with the demand of Hesse for the recall of Canitz, thereupon send away Görtz (the Hessian Envoy) from Berlin, and then approach the Grand Duke with this *fait accompli* of ruptured relations, and a—"*tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin!*"

Grand-ducal notions of diplomacy.

The King of Prussia hesitated not to accept the advice of Herr von Bismarck, who was at once entrusted with the task of giving effect to it; and for this purpose he repaired to Darmstadt to "beard the lion in his den." Of his interview with the Grand Duke he gave a most amusing account, telling how His Highness, among other things, avowed that he "only cared to have such diplomatists about him as asked no questions which could not be answered."† To which Bismarck replied, that "diplomatists in general were expressly paid for continuing to ask questions until they could no longer get an answer." But neither from the Grand Duke nor his Prime Minister could he wring a promise of the satisfaction required by the offended honour of Prussia. It was not calculated to raise his hopes of a decent settlement of the squabble that, in calling to discuss it with Dalwigk, he was asked by that worthy to come back in two hours; and when at last Bismarck managed to procure an audience of the great man, and begged him to step over to the palace and have it out with him before the

* "*schnöder Rheinbündler.*"

† It was one of Dalwigk's charges against Baron Canitz that the latter had asked him an indiscreet question.

Grand Duke, the Minister declined the invitation on the plea that his attire was unsuited to the presence of Majesty.

A second time did Bismarck return to Darmstadt, but with no better result. Dalwigk was as obstinate in swearing on his honour that he had received the alleged provocation from Canitz, as Canitz was persistent in avowing his innocence on his sacred oath of office; but Bismarck could not doubt that Dalwigk had trifled with the truth to his master, when he beheld how the hypocrite affected to profess his "especial predilection" for that Prussia, with implacable hatred of which his heart was well known to be filled. That happy relations between Prussia and Hesse could never exist as long as Dalwigk remained in office Bismarck was assured by one of the Hessian Minister's own colleagues (Baron von Schäffer-Bernstein) who aspired to usurp his place, and who scrupled not, conspirator-like, to seek a secret meeting with the Prussian Envoy in a solitary wood,* the better to avoid detection in the dangerous task of seeking to prove himself a much more acceptable Hessian Premier to Prussia than his chief.

A conspirator-like meeting in a wood.

Conciliatory offers were of no avail. The Grand Duke refused to take advantage of the door of escape that Bismarck left open to him, and the "*bellum civile*," which His Highness

"*Bellum civile*" between Hesse and Prussia.

* "Soon after my last audience with the Grand Duke, he (Schäffer) asked me for an interview, which he declared, however, must necessarily be of a strictly private nature; and so it took place in a wood between here and Mayence, whither I went on pretence of a shooting excursion."

had so earnestly deprecated, was at once declared by the rupture of diplomatic intercourse between Darmstadt and Berlin (July, 1853). All the Courts of Germany were in a titter at the scandal. In the whole course of his life the Grand Duke had never been so boldly spoken to as by Herr von Bismarck. It was plain that, whoever was the nominal head of the Government at Berlin, Prussia, under some latent influence or other, was beginning to hold her head much higher than of late. Bismarck himself was appointed interim Chargé d'Affaires at Darmstadt, but his Government revoked the nomination on his showing that it savoured of conciliation and half-measures. So determined, indeed, was he to make his opponents realise their isolation, that he returned to the Hessian Envoy at Frankfort a presentation copy of the Darmstadt Court-Calendar for 1854, which had always hitherto been exchanged for the Prussian publication of the same character.

But this state of things could not continue for ever. Hesse soon began to feel wretched in her separation, and to wish to return to her old love. Meeting Bismarck at dinner in Frankfort, Dalwigk sang to him a sort of low-toned *pater peccavi*. The Grand Duke soon after wrote an autograph missive of penitence to the King of Prussia, who responded to this first advance by an epistle full of conciliation; and by the beginning of the year 1855, after about eighteen months of "*bellum civile*," Bismarck was able to announce that diplomatic relations had been restored between the two Courts, and that he himself

Bismarck's theory of decorations.

had been decorated by the Grand Duke for his merits in the affair with the Grand Cross of the Order of Philip the Magnanimous.

"It is to be supposed," he wrote, "that Herr von Dalwigk, on his part, expects or wishes to receive the Grand Ribbon of the Red Eagle in exchange for this (decoration of mine). And if I am right in my assumption that, in most cases where orders are conferred on foreign ministers, their services for the future are more taken into consideration than their merits in the past, I would venture to suggest that the ambition of Herr von Dalwigk might be gratified in the interest of our good relations, which would thus remain undisturbed by disappointed hopes."

The King, however, thought it meanwhile inopportune to comply with the suggestion of his Envoy until the acts of Dalwigk should entitle him to the decoration; but in any case Bismarck had the satisfaction of knowing that, although he had not succeeded in pushing the Hessian Premier from power, he had at least, so to speak, brought him to his knees before the Prussia which he loathed.

We have seen how Bismarck, comparatively free from any "youthful illusions" with respect to Austria, came to Frankfort with the mission and the hope of establishing parity of influence between that Power and Prussia in all matters subject to the jurisdiction of the Diet. Now, the first element with which he had to reckon in the attainment of this object was the fact that the thirty-four minor States, with an aggregate population less than that of Prussia, disposed of fifteen votes to Prussia's one. It followed that, as between the two

Austria's domination of the Diet.

Great Powers, the predominant one in the Diet would be that which could command the suffrage of the petty Sovereigns; and it at once became apparent that most of these were in the leading-strings of Austria. "In any case of divergence between Austria and Prussia, as matters now stand," Bismarck wrote, a few months after his arrival in Frankfort, "the majority of the Federal Assembly is ensured to Austria." And here were the concise reasons he gave for this state of affairs:—

"It is attributable," he wrote (22nd December, 1851), "to a mistrustful irritability maintained towards Prussia by most of the Middle-German Courts ever since the epoch of the March-Revolution. In those quarters an inclination obtains to lend credence to insinuations that, by reason of her geographical situation, Prussia cannot but be bent upon coercing, in one way or another, the Princes whose realms abut upon her frontiers into dependence upon her, appealing against them (with this object) to popular sympathy with German unity. Austria, meanwhile, flatters the 'particularistic' Sovereigns with the prospect of being rendered independent and autocratic, as far as their respective subjects are concerned; while pointing out to them that her own geographical position with relation to the smaller States incapacitates her from attempting to encroach upon their independence. We should not, moreover, under-estimate the influence exercised upon most German Sovereigns by their personal *entourage*. As a rule, the most influential personages at German Courts belong to a social class which has much more to hope for from an Austrian than from a Prussian evolution of German affairs. Besides, a great many persons appertaining to this category have sons or other relatives in the Austrian service, whose advancement they consider to be bound up with their own furtherance of Austria's policy. . . . Furthermore, I regard the following as an important consideration. The German States are afraid of reprisals on the part of Austria, whereas they feel sure of conciliatory and benevolent treatment on that of Prussia, whatever may happen. . . . Our Confederates are accustomed to Austria's system of strict

reciprocity, in friendship and in enmity, and of never allowing herself to be restrained, either by moral or legal principles, from fully paying out anybody who, being expected to stand by her, fails to do so."

This, then, was the state of affairs which made Bismarck counsel "steadfast persistence on the part of Prussia in showing no consideration whatever to any German Government which does not take pains to deserve it." This was the state of affairs which induced him to declare on various occasions within the year even of his arrival at Frankfort that—

Prussian grievances and warnings.

"Prince Schwarzenberg, not satisfied with resuming the position accorded to the Empire by the Federal Constitution up to 1848, desires to utilise the Revolution (which all but ruined Austria) as a basis for the realisation of far-seeing plans;"

that—

"Should the vote be postponed, or be given in the negative, he would declare that Prussia would go her own way, even without the consent of those contradictory gentlemen;"

that—

"If the Diet, by direct and reckless enforcement of the system of majorities, attempted to constitute itself into a Board having for its functions the exercise of compulsion upon Prussia, means would be found to attach to this last bond of German unity a weight which it would prove incompetent to bear;"

and that—

"before he could recommend the adoption of such a policy at Berlin, the question would have first to be decided by an appeal to the sword" (November, 1851).

And now let us glance at the nature of the Prussian grievances which thus made Bismarck threaten Austria

with an appeal to the sword within a little year of the time when he had affected to vindicate Olmütz, and before he had sat four months in the re-galvanised Diet. We say glance, for our readers, we are sure, would not thank us for acting as the resurrectionist to questions which were unlovely enough in life, and are now more than repulsive with the long decay of death. Nevertheless, a hasty sketch of their anatomy is necessary to give some idea of the stifling atmosphere of obstructions and impossibilities in which Prussia, the natural head of Germany, had to breathe, until it was at last purified by Bismarck with the disinfecting torch of war.

Austrian "sin-register."

Of these obstructions perhaps the most irritating was a formal one, consisting in the persistence with which Austria sought to control the order of business in the Diet itself. By the Federal Constitution, Austria had the presiding seat in the Diet; but between the occupant of that seat and the Prussian member there raged a perpetual controversy as to the competence of the permanent chairman. The Austrian President was autocratic and overbearing, while the Prussian Envoy was ever firm in his assertion of business privileges. Despatch after despatch went to Berlin detailing the "register of sins"—one of these containing thirteen separate items—of the Austrian President. Violent scenes and altercations—sometimes even accompanied by the shaking of angry fists—were frequent. Baron Prokesch* was the Austrian "sinner"

* Recapitulating his experience at Frankfort, Bismarck wrote (March, 1859): "This state of things has been aggravated by the circumstance

who sought to carry to the highest pitch this policy of presidential encroachment, and sometimes when severely castigated by his Prussian colleague he would affect to change his ways. As Bismarck wrote :—

"When first I met Prokesch again on his return here, we were both free from embarrassment. The sleek cheerfulness with which he was masked also found expression in the colour of his gloves, which were of the most delicate sky-blue tint, and, for a wonder, quite new. It was just striking noon (2nd July, 1855), and I casually observed that this moment exactly marked the middle of the year, whereupon he seized me by the hand with effusive heartiness, and said : 'Come, let us forget the squabbles and sorrows of the old year, and commence quite a new one.'"

But the new year, which was to bring unison, only served to swell the "sin-register" of the domineering Austrians. It was some consolation to Bismarck that, for his bold and manful championship of the rights of Prussia and of the minor States in matters of form, the representatives of these States often squeezed his hand in silent gratitude; but that availed little when their dread of Austria's vengeance made them truckle to her on almost all questions of substance affecting her

that Austria has appointed to the Presidency of an Assembly in which her own position (as Member and Presiding Power) is a very delicate one, three men, one after another (Thun, Prokesch, and Rechberg), of notorious irritability. Neither the character of the persons entrusted by Austria with the defence of her cause in the Bund against Prussia, nor her choice of weapons for the fray, has contributed to impart an amicable and conciliatory tone to the Federal proceedings. There has been no lack of attempts at outwitting (such as are prescribed by the traditions of diplomacy for centuries past), at the perversion of facts, at personal calumniation; even falsifications of documents containing written agreements between the different Governments have been officially brought home to Herr von Prokesch."

relations to Prussia: "the reorganisation of the Diet, the question of the German Navy, the differences in the matter of the Zollverein, the legislation respecting trade, the Press, the Constitution, the fortresses of the Bund at Rastatt and Mayence, the affair of Neuchâtel and the Eastern question."* Before, however, glancing at the motives which divided Prussia and Austria on the chief of these questions, let us prepare our minds for the contrast by a picture of their apparent union on a point of foreign policy.

Bismarck and Louis Napoleon.

Bismarck had not been many months at Frankfort when Europe was startled by the news of what some denounced as an enormous public crime, and others lauded as an act of courage and wisdom. On the 2nd of December, 1851, Louis Napoleon, President of the French Republic, committed his *coup d'état*. How did Bismarck regard it? Should we not be prepared to find that the *Stadtvertilger*, or "town-uprooter," as he had been called, personally sympathised with the man who had drenched the streets of Paris in the blood of its citizens? Was it not natural to expect that he, who had looked with pain

* Bismarck to Baron Schleinitz, 12th May, 1859. Says Dr. Busch:—"In the matter of the Rastatt garrison, anent which Austria took great pains to induce German States, generally at one with the Berlin Government, to outvote Prussia in the Federal Assembly, Bismarck plainly declared (June, 1858) to Count Rechberg, Prokesch's successor, that he would request Manteuffel to draw up a Protocol in the name of Prussia, announcing that 'he regarded the Federal Treaties as violated,' and that he (Bismarck) 'would be compelled, until the receipt of further instructions, to refrain from participating in the proceedings of the Federal Assembly.'"—"*Our Chancellor.*"

upon the growth of parliamentary institutions in Prussia, should view with pleasure the gagging of the Assembly in France? A man of bold and surprising measures himself, he warmly admires the same qualities in others; and there can be little doubt that, when told of the *coup d'état*, he was thrilled by the sympathy which kindred spirits feel—kindred, and yet how contrary! But personal feelings are sometimes incompatible with political motives, and as yet Bismarck was only the mouthpiece, not the master, of his Sovereign.

We find him first expressing himself on the subject two days after the perpetrator of "the 2nd of December" had been elected President of the Republic for a further term of ten years. Austria and Prussia had been asked by Baden to aid in chastising Switzerland, by an occupation of part of her Rhenish territory, for the defiant hospitality she extended to political refugees; and Bismarck sought to dissuade his Government from such a step, "seeing that, among other things, France under her new rulers would now in all likelihood be only too eager to welcome every provocation to a war proceeding from Germany." In the following July Bismarck had an interview at Wiesbaden with the King of the Belgians, who bade him be on his guard against Louis Napoleon, of whom His Majesty at that time spoke very contemptuously, describing Belgium as the vanguard of Prussia. It happened that when Louis Napoleon got himself proclaimed Emperor, exactly a year after the *coup d'état*, Bismarck was acting

for the Austrian Count Thun, as President of the Diet; and to him, therefore, fell the task of guiding its deliberations as to its recognition of the momentous change.

The incident again furnished a glaring proof of how little unity there was in its counsels, and of what jarring interests it was the centre. The German States had to consider separately, as well as collectively, whether and how they should recognise the new French Emperor; but it was surely natural to expect that, before manifesting their will in the former way, they should consult the inclinations of their leaders. So thought Bismarck; but he was mortified to find that, before his Government had made up its mind on the subject, the Duchy of Nassau and the City of Frankfort—the latter represented by a man swelling with *parvenu* pride and lusting after imperial orders—had secretly hastened to salute the new French Sovereign.

> It was regrettable enough, wrote Bismarck, that in such an important matter England should not have sought to act in concert with the rest of Europe; but it was doubly reprehensible in the two petty States above named to have given such lamentable evidence of the looseness of the bond which held together Germany in time of peril.

Ever possessed by the idea of national unity, Bismarck could have looked with partial unconcern on the domestic disputes that divided his countrymen if they could only have been made to present a united front to the foreigner.

Austria was willing, for once, to act in harmony with her rival, but still her recognition of Napoleon was

not without an appearance of indecorous haste. A French journal published at Frankfort was enthusiastic in its advocacy of the upstart Emperor, and Bismarck strongly suspected that its articles emanated from the Foreign Office at Vienna. He determined to have certitude on the subject, and he achieved his object with characteristic skill. Conversing one day with the proprietor of the newspaper in question, Baron Brints, brother-in-law of the Austrian Foreign Minister, he boldly congratulated him on the direct relations he entertained with Louis Napoleon. With virtuous rage the worthy Baron repudiated the insinuation, alleging in his defence that the articles referred to came straight to him from Vienna. The diplomacy of Frankfort at this time was not without its other detective arts.

"It is remarkable," wrote Bismarck, "that M. de Tallenay (the French Ambassador) knew every particular of our last meeting half an hour after we rose. The key to the mystery is furnished by the fact that, immediately after the sitting in which the French question first came forward, I saw Herr von Reinhard (Würtemberg) leaving the house of M. de Tallenay, which I can scrutinise from my garden. On the same day, too, Herr von Dalwigk came from Darmstadt, went to Tallenay's, and then returned to the railway."

It was evidently Bismarck's belief that a good diplomatist must use his eyes as well as his ears; and does not Carlyle somewhere say that, for a hundred men who can think, there is not one that can see?

The intricate negotiations as to the recognition of Napoleon were conducted by Bismarck with great delicacy and skill; and at last the two leading

Powers of Germany agreed to re-accredit their Ambassadors at Paris on the condition, expressed in the mildest possible form, that the new Sovereign would promise to keep the peace of Europe and observe existing treaties. How he broke his word, and what he suffered for doing so, all the world knows. The incident was closed by Bismarck giving a grand dress dinner to the Imperial representative at the Diet; but still it left disagreeable traces on the minds of some of the minor German States, who thought they had been much too cavalierly treated in the matter by their powerful chiefs.

It was from reasons analogous to those which had induced the two leading Powers of Germany to extend their moral support to the successful perpetrator of the *coup d'état* in France, that they combined to undo as much as possible of the work of the Revolution in Germany, and to combat what still remained of its spirit. However disposed towards Germany herself, Louis Napoleon, as the throttler of the Democratic Dragon in his own country, could not but be hailed as a congenial Sovereign by those two German Powers whose almost single bond of union was a desire to counteract and nullify the republican movement of the time. But even as to the means of realising this desire, Austria and Prussia were woefully divided. Among other items of the Austrian programme was a proposal to put the Press of the whole nation under much stricter restraints.

"Pas une Contre-Révolution, mais le contraire de la Révolution."

But, strange to say, the full extent of thi repressive

policy was opposed by the man who, shortly before, had declaimed against free journalism as a poisoned well. Bismarck had been grieved to see Prussia under the dominion of the Revolution, but he was equally unwilling to see her in all things become the docile pupil of Austria. And Austria, he was firmly convinced, aimed at forcing on Prussia the alternative of refusing to accept a decision of the Diet, or of accepting it and thus provoking an inevitable conflict between her own Government and Chambers.* For Prussia already had a Press Law of her own; and was the will of the Prussian people, in matters of domestic legislation, to be subordinated entirely to that of the German Sovereigns?† "It seemed to me out of the question,"

Freedom of the German Press.

* Despatch of 6th August, 1852.

† Bismarck regarded a free Press (in Prussia) as a powerful means of combating the pretensions of Austria, and of the two evils—a domineering Austria or a dictatorial Press—he looked upon the latter as the least. In one of his later reports he argued strongly in favour of free discussion, both in Parliament and in newspapers. Other German Governments, he said, might be unable to make concessions to the Liberal party. "But in Prussia the King would remain master, even if the whole standing army were disbanded. Prussia, therefore, can afford, without injury to the authority of the Government, to grant a far larger measure of political liberty than would be possible in the rest of Germany." He called attention to the fact that a deep impression had been produced in Germany by unfettered debates in the Saxon Chambers on the proceedings of the Confederate Diet. But "how much more powerful an impression would have been produced if similar debates had taken place in the Prussian Chambers! If Prussia permitted open discussion regarding its German policy, regarding its position in the Confederate Diet, regarding the difficulties which it has to overcome there, and regarding the aims of its opponents, probably a few sittings of the Prussian Parliament would suffice to put an end to the pretensions of the majority in the Diet. The misrepresentations of hired newspapers cannot be corrected until the Prussian Press obtains full material for the consideration of questions relating to the Confederate Diet and the utmost possible degree of

wrote Bismarck (August, 1852), "to make the activity of the Press and the book-trade in Prussia dependent on the resolutions of other German Governments." That was the key-note of his contention, and he succeeded in making his Government adopt the view that the Diet should only enact such general and uniform rules against the abuse of free writing as were consistent with the existing Press laws of his own country. Some slight concessions, however, he did make, merely to avoid the appearance of selfish indifference to the reactionary wants of minor Governments, and he subsequently followed the same line of action with respect to the suppression of obnoxious or suspected societies.

German democracy.

That he sympathised with the Revolution, as was charged against him by the critics of his opposition to Austria's extreme despotism, there was nothing whatever to show; but the remedy against Revolution, he thought, lay less with the Diet than with each of its individual members; and any German State that proved indulgent to the spirit of democracy was sure to get the cold shoulder from Prussia. In 1855, for example, Bismarck drew the attention of his Government to the scandalous licence of the Press in Brunswick,

freedom." . . . . . And again: "The Federal policy, which is precisely and specifically necessary to Prussia, can only gain in strength by publicity and frank discussion. In the Press, truth will not come to light through the mists conjured up by the mendacity of subsidised newspapers until the material wherewith to expose all the mysteries of the Bund shall be supplied to the Prussian Press, with unrestricted liberty to utilise it."

"which teems with such violent attacks against the German Sovereigns and their Governments that I cannot recollect anything of the kind in the first half of the year 1848." . . . "Yesterday, on the subject coming up in the Diet, it was admitted on all sides that, of all German States, the Democracy of 1848 has still freest play in the Duchy of Brunswick, and that no spontaneous remedy was to be expected from such a Government as its present one. . . . Brunswick's attitude to us of late has certainly not been of a kind calculated to impose upon us the duty of especial consideration towards it."

Bismarck champions constitutionalism.

It was from motives similar to those which had induced him to stem the full current of Austrian reaction in the matter of the Press and socio-political societies, that Bismarck urged moderation on the Diet in seeking to purge the Constitutions of the various States from principles opposed to its own. In conformity with the reactionary programme of the Diet (August, 1851), the Prince of Lippe had abolished (March, 1853) the Constitution acquired by his subjects in 1849; and it was significant of Bismarck's attitude of moderation in the matter that both parties to the abrogated Charter appealed to him for support of their respective pleas.* He was all the more ready to lend his good offices for a settlement of the quarrel, as not wishing the Diet to adjudicate on it in a sense degrading to the Prince, and from this humiliation he saved His Highness by counselling him

* "The dissolved Landtag," wrote Bismarck, "intends to lodge with the Diet a protest against the proceedings of the Lippe Government, and for this purpose has sent here one of its members in the person of Assessor Petri, who has called on me and begged my mediation with my Government in their favour." Soon afterwards the Prince of Lippe also wrote to Bismarck, hoping that he would stand up for his interests.

to anticipate the decision of the Diet with certain liberal concessions that would appease his subjects—which were accordingly granted.

Alarming collapse of a Lippe statesman.

But the incident did not pass without affording another proof of the persistent way in which Austria intrigued against Prussia. It was mainly on encouragement from Austria that the Prince of Lippe had committed his *coup d'état*, but when the matter was brought before the Diet her action was very different from her previous advice.

"I have already told you," wrote Bismarck to his chief, "of the double game played by Prokesch in the affair of Lippe. State-Councillor Fischer" (the reactionary protagonist of the Prince), "a portly and somewhat ungainly personage, to whom I explained the true state of the case, was so utterly shocked by the (Austrian) perfidy of which he discovered himself to have been the dupe, that he gave expression to his moral indignation in gestures so violent as made him collapse before my eyes with the *chaise-longue* on which he was sitting, and lie stretched" (at 'lubber length') "on the floor, in equal despair of humanity and of the solidity of our joiner-work here."

Bismarck loves not the Jews, but hates the Austrians more.

But the affair of Lippe was not more characteristic of the play of intrigue between Austria and Prussia than the proposal (December, 1853) to deprive the Frankfort Jews of their recently-acquired civic rights. Bismarck loved not the Jews, but he hated the Austrians more; and as this reactionary motion emanated from the Austro-Ultramontane party in Frankfort, whose predominance Prussia had every reason to curtail, he sought and obtained the permission of his Government to thwart their anti-Semitic aims. But the delicious part of the matter

was that his successful opposition to the Austro-Catholic faction in the Free City was, to his utter astonishment, supported by his Austrian colleague, Baron Prokesch, "from which I infer that the house of Rothschild at the present time has more importance for Austria than the Frankfort patricians."

How little he thought Austria was entitled to tender consideration on the part of Prussia he had shown in the spring of 1853, by opposing the motion of Hesse (Grand Duchy) that England should be seriously asked to provide against abuse of the privilege of asylum extended by her to political refugees. Prussia herself, he said, had not much to fear from the foreign agitation of such characters, and petty States like Hesse had no business to take the initiative in such important European questions without consulting the two leading German Powers. By complying with the request of Hesse, Prussia would only please Austria at the risk of offending England, and no return service was to be expected from a Power—Austria—"with whom it is not usual to do anything *pour nos beaux yeux*." One cannot consider Bismarck's attitude to these questions without thinking of the Puritans who hated bear-baiting—not so much because it gave pain to the bear, as because it gave pleasure to the spectators.

His views of England as an asylum for political refugees.

Characteristic of the relations between Austria and Prussia was their attitude to the question of the North-Sea Fleet—"a question," to use the words of Bismarck, "with which the Diet wrestled for almost

a whole year to its own utter exhaustion." Under pressure of the Revolution, which it was expected would give birth to the Empire, the German Sovereigns in 1848 had made a show of clubbing together, so to speak, for a navy which should defend the naissant Empire's coasts, and there was actually called into existence an infant fleet consisting of a few wretchedly-manned vessels.* But what to do with this toy armada, after its *raison d'être* had failed to be realised, was the burning question which vexed the German mind. Was it indispensable to the nation? Was it the property of the Bund, and if not, should it be declared to be such? Who was bound to pay for its maintenance? But above all things, to what authority did it owe obedience? "Austria," as Bismarck wrote at a later stage of the controversy, "aimed at acquiring direct or indirect power over the fleet, without having made any pecuniary sacrifices for it either in the past or for the future."

The National Fleet question.

But Prussia, to whom it mainly owed its existence, could naturally never submit to that; and the quarrel became acute when Bismarck proposed, as a preliminary to the settlement of every other question connected with it, that all arrears of quotas which had been promised for its support should be paid up. And now all the contrary winds of raging controversy began to rush from the Æolus

A warning to the Rothschilds.

* The North-Sea Fleet consisted of two sailing frigates, three steam ditto, six steam-corvettes, twenty-seven gunboats, one transport vessel, and 900 men!

cave of the Diet, and mountains of despatches, protests, reports and protocols were piled up. Sometimes Austria affected to side with Prussia, and again she would veer round and head the phalanx of the petty States. At length the Diet resolved to cover all past naval outlay and arrears by a loan from Rothschild on the security, if need be, of the federal moneys in the hands of that banker; but Bismarck protested against this decision as being *ultra vires*, while intimating to Rothschild that, if he advanced to the Diet cash which had been "deposited with him for purposes defined by treaty," he would do so at his own risk and peril. It was to no purpose that Count Thun, "in great excitement, denounced this protest as an insult to the whole Diet and a defiance of its decisions." Prussia remained firm, for the principle at stake was a vital one.

Bismarck's contention was that any resolution about the fleet, which was not an "organic institution," required to be unanimous; while the Austrians would have it that, in cases of disputed or doubtful competence, a majority of the Diet itself must decide the point. From this it followed that Austria, Prussia, and the other Kingdoms—with an aggregate of seven votes—might be outvoiced by the "Dwarf-States" possessing eight; or that the pettiest member of the Bund might successfully oppose his veto to the decision of all the others. This formal deadlock, to which the Diet was brought by its treatment of the fleet question, was well calculated to show on what an impossible basis it had

"O Diet, thou hound, Thou art not sound!"

been re-constructed—and to justify Bismarck's remark "that Heine's well-known song, '*O Bund, Du Hund, Du bist nicht gesund, &c.*' ('O Bund, thou hound, Thou art not sound'), would soon be adopted by unanimous resolve as the national anthem of the Germans."

But under this vital question of form there also lurked an equally vital one of substance for Prussia, seeing that it was the aim of Austria to draw the fleet within the sphere of her own exclusive influence at the Diet. Nor did the proposal that Austria should command in the Mediterranean, Prussia in the Baltic, and the other States in the German Ocean, result in anything but proof of the lamentable fact that within scarcely a year of Olmütz, the old conflicting tendencies of an Austrian "Grand Germany," of a "restricted (Prussian) Union," and a Middle-State "Trias," again manifested themselves in the Diet with redoubled force. A final attempt was made to combine the North-Western States for the maintenance of the fleet; but these States, with Hanover at their head, were too weak to do the thing themselves, yet too jealously proud to do it under Prussia. "With the fleet," wrote Bismarck of his Hanoverian colleague, "he would have nothing more to do, even if Neptune himself were to join the proposed Union (for its maintenance)."

Bismarck and the Bremen apothecary.

Nothing could better illustrate the deplorable spirit of disunion, which then divided the Sovereigns of Germany, than the circumstance that their rancorous squabbles about the national navy finally resulted in a decision to prevent its

becoming the cause of sanguinary discord by handing it over to the hammer of the auctioneer; and the last we hear of this first abortive symbol of German unity is the sorrowful mention by Bismarck of an "apothecary at Bremen" who had "impounded naval stores to the value of ninety thalers, his wage for the rubbing out of ink spots."

But divergent as were the aims of Austria and Prussia with respect to the naval defence of the nation, the question of its commercial policy revealed a still greater discrepancy between these two Powers. In the course of a conversation on the latter subject (Nov., 1851) Count Thun compared Prussia with a man who had once won 100,000 thalers in a lottery, and then cast up his domestic accounts on the assumption that his luck would be repeated every year. To which Bismarck replied that, "if these ideas (of the Count) were also entertained at Vienna, he foresaw that Prussia would again have to try the lottery referred to (*i.e.*, war), and whether or not she drew another prize would rest with God."

Prussia and the "war-lottery."

On Baron Nell (one of the Austrians at the Diet) hearing of the death of the King of Hanover, Ernest August (18th November, 1851), he exclaimed in high spirits, "Now we have won the game!" But this was premature joy. The "game" referred to was the commercial leadership of Germany, and this particular kind of hegemony had hitherto been in the hands of Prussia, though Austria

The commercial leadership of Germany.

now began to make desperate endeavours to wrest it from her rival. This commercial predominance of Prussia dated from the year 1834, when eighteen German States—whose example was gradually followed by others, but not by Austria—grouped themselves around the great Northern Power into a Zollverein, or Customs-Union. Abolishing, as it did, all import duties on its inner frontiers, and only raising taxes for the common weal on its outer perimeter, this Customs-Union was the first approach made by the nation towards that political unity for which it had so long been sighing; and the fact that Prussia stood in the van of this line of advance was for Austria sufficient motive to seek to oust her from her position of light and leading. It was, therefore, Prince Schwarzenberg's dearest aim to transfer the control of the Zollverein from Prussia to the Diet, or, in other words, to the Cabinet of Vienna; but both he and his successor, Count Buol, were given by Bismarck to understand that Prussia looked upon the Bund "as a purely police and military institution," and would tolerate no extension of its functions in the direction desired.

Austria, however, was not to be so easily baulked of her purpose, and what she could not batter she cast about to sap. If she failed to prevail on Prussia to admit her, on her own terms, into the Customs-Union in which she then hoped to become the dominant factor, she could at least endeavour to detach from Prussia some of her commercial allies, and establish with them a rival Duties League as the nucleus of

The Customs-Union question.

a Zollverein, under Austrian leadership, embracing all Germany. Side by side with the Prussian Zollverein there existed a similar League under Hanover, which was called for distinction's sake the Steuerverein;* and, penetrating the designs of her rival, Prussia had taken the precaution (September, 1851) to conclude a treaty with Hanover which virtually provided for the fusion of these two Customs-Unions at the beginning of the year 1854. At the same time she invited her commercial allies to Berlin to discuss the re-constitution of the Zollverein on the basis of her agreement with Hanover.

But the sensibilities of some of these allies—especially those of the South—were ruffled by the secret and independent manner in which Prussia had come to terms with Hanover; and, quick to profit by their resentment, Austria issued counter invitations to a grand previous palaver of a similar character at Vienna. Prussia declined to go; and her refusal was the signal for her rival to commence negotiations with Saxony and the Southern States with the view of forming a new Zollverein that should not include Prussia. From a political point of view these States, which banded themselves together into what was called the "Darmstadt Coalition," were inclined to listen to the proposals of the Vienna Cabinet;

Bismarck "bosses" the Press.

* The members of this *Steuerverein* were Hanover, Oldenburg, Brunswick, and Lippe. The word *Zoll* generally means "customs-duty," and *Steuer*, "tax" of an inland-revenue kind; but both the *Zoll-* and the *Steuer-verein* had for their main objects the levying of frontier or import dues.

but, on the other hand, their purely commercial interests prompted them to cleave to Prussia; and the tendency of the Governments in this respect was strengthened by a popular agitation which Bismarck did everything he could to intensify and fan. Indeed, most of his despatches during this period do little else than record his endeavours to "boss" and "nobble" the Press of South Germany, and otherwise to create sympathy for Prussia in the breast of the South.*

We cannot detail the intricate negotiations and intrigues which followed. We will content ourselves with saying that their outcome was a demand on the part of the "Darmstadt Coalition" for a complete German Customs-Union on the basis of a preliminary treaty of commerce with Austria; while Prussia who, as compared with her rival, tended more towards free-trade practice, stipulated as a condition precedent of a trade-convention with Austria that the Customs-Union under her own commercial flag should first be reconstituted on the principle of her (September) agreement with Hanover. This was the vital question of priority which agitated all Germany in those discordant days, but nothing would induce Prussia to yield, and Bismarck had an opportunity of dwelling on her determination to hold her ground when, in the summer of 1852 (8th June to 7th July), he was sent to Vienna to act for a few

The "Darmstadt Coalition."

*By establishing, for example, a connection between the learned, scientific, and statistical societies of Berlin and the southern capitals.

weeks as the substitute of Count Arnim, the regular Ambassador.*

In his despatches from Vienna we are presented with some masterly character-sketches of society in that capital; and his reception by non-official circles, at least, was cordial beyond his expectations. To a certain extent, indeed, he was even lionised.

Bismarck in Vienna; Windischgratz, Bach, and Buol.

"Field-marshal Prince Windischgrätz, on entering the drawing-room, placed me under embargo the whole evening; and spoke with the greatest friendship and appreciation of everything Prussian; which is, indeed, also said to be the feelings of the higher military element about the Emperor. . . ." "By the whole *entourage* of his Majesty I have been very kindly received; and it is only Bach" (Minister of the Interior) "who regards me with ill-concealed aversion;"

which would have been less surprising on the part of Bach had he been able to scan his own portrait as painted for the benefit of Herr von Manteuffel by the

* This was not the Count Arnim who afterwards became the rival of Bismarck. In an editorial note Herr von Poschinger says:—"It is incorrect to assume that Bismarck's mission to the Court of Vienna resulted from a desire on the part of Prussia to conclude a separate agreement with Austria apart from the middle States, as was afterwards actually done. The King's true motive for sending him was his wish to give Herr von Bismarck the benefit of some preliminary training as an ambassador before making him a minister." On June 10th Bismarck wrote to Herr von Manteuffel from Vienna: "I announce to your Excellency that I arrived here on the evening of the day before yesterday. I went immediately on my arrival to Count Arnim, and handed to him the despatches directed to him. He was already in bed, and thought that I had come as a traveller; the news that I had been sent to act as his substitute surprised him, and he thought the arrangement unusual—the more so as there was nothing to do here."

object of his hatred.* Count Buol, Prince Schwarzenberg's successor, Bismarck found to be—

"incredibly ignorant of German affairs, and it is his irresolution and embarrassment springing from this cause which have procured him a name for a forbidding, Anglo-maniac stiffness. . . . But even he is now less buttoned up towards me than when we first met;"

and yet Bismarck was inclined to suspect Buol of having intrigued to retard his presentation to the Emperor, for whom he was the bearer of an autograph letter from his own Sovereign.

At length, after waiting more than a fortnight,

"during which time a certain lack of cordiality" (on the part of Austrian officialism) "had compelled me also to avoid the appearance of *empressement*,"

* "Bach," wrote Bismarck to his chief, "Bach was to Schwarzenberg what the Moor was to Fiesco. He tries to play the cavalier, affects a nonchalant demeanour, and makes the dinner company wait five minutes before rising until, with noisy ostentation, he has rinsed out and gargled his mouth. Great is the hatred of the aristocracy and the military party against Bach, so much so that it overcomes the prudence with which conversation is otherwise carried on. It is only the Emperor's name and his own office which shield him from treatment like that offered to Pillersdorf (a March Minister) by General Hardegg, who said before witnesses in a distinguished *salon*: 'How can a scoundrel like you have the face to come into the same drawing-room with me? It is only respect for the ladies that keeps me from spitting on you, but out with you!' And out he went. By the *haute volée* here Bach is neither tolerated nor invited. I know not whether it is hatred or truth which makes people describe him as the banner-bearer and bellows-blower of anti-Prussian fury." And again: "The leaders of the party hostile to us, especially in the field of commercial politics, are pointed out to me as the 'Jews' clique'—Bach, Hock, and newspaper writers—founded by the deceased Prime Minister (Schwarzenberg), although Bach is not a Jew. So that I consider it all the more desirable to form acquaintances in military circles in the immediate vicinity of the Emperor."

Bismarck was graciously enough received at Ofen (Buda) by the youthful Francis Joseph

Bismarck and Francis Joseph.

"whose personality makes a very good impression on me. He is quick of apprehension, has a safe and circumspect manner of judging, with a simplicity and openness of demeanour that beget confidence."

The Kaiser, wearing a Prussian uniform, did Bismarck the rare honour of receiving him alone.* Their conversation was rich in mutual assurances of a desire to see a harmonious co-operation, in all matters of German policy, established between the Courts of Vienna and Berlin; and at dinner even the Emperor whispered to his guest that, in the hope that King Frederick William would imitate his example, he had commanded his ministers to put an end to the unseemly attacks against Prussia in the Austrian Press. But that was all. On the Zollverein question Bismarck was as firm as Francis Joseph. The Emperor avowed his intention to adhere to the programme of Customs-Unity for the whole nation; while Bismarck declared that Austria, with her peculiar tariffs, would have meanwhile to content herself with being left out of this Union. The Zollverein, he said, must first be reconstructed under Prussia, who would then be ready to conclude with Austria a trading-treaty which should serve as a means of paving the way for the gradual admittance of the Kaiser-State into the great commercial fold of the nation.

The Vienna Press wondered why Prussia had not

* That is, without the accompanying presence, as was usual, of the Foreign Minister.

sent an older and more experienced diplomatist to "effect a reconciliation with Austria;" while, on the other hand, his attention was indirectly drawn in high official quarters to the danger which threatened his diplomatic reputation, and to the prospect of Austrian and other grand-crosses in the event of his making a favourable arrangement. "In the face of such temptations," wrote Bismarck, "I cannot but compare myself with that Roman—Fabricius, if I mistake not—under the threats and allurements of Pyrrhus." * And like Fabricius, he remained firm.

A Prussian Fabricius.

"When in Vienna," he wrote on returning to Frankfort, "I did all I could to render the relations between the two Cabinets as friendly as possible—without, however, yielding anything in the matter of the Zollverein." . . . "All the representatives of German States resident here," he had written from Vienna, "were waiting in the ante-chamber of Count Buol, in evident eagerness about the result of our interview, and besieged me on coming out with questions which I could not" (*i.e.*, would not) "answer, but from which I clearly gathered that their Governments will probably neither approve nor share the decided attitude taken up by Count Buol."

He was quite right. But why detail the dry negotiations which proved the justness of his forecast?

* "Caius Fabricius," writes Dr. Smith ("Classical Dictionary"), "was one of the most popular heroes in the Roman annals. He was consul B.C. 282, and two years afterwards was one of the Roman ambassadors sent to Pyrrhus at Tarentum to negotiate a ransom or exchange of prisoners. Pyrrhus used every effort to gain the favour of Fabricius; but the sturdy Roman was proof against all his seductions, and rejected all his offers. In 278 Fabricius was consul a second time, when he sent back to Pyrrhus the traitor who had offered to poison him. Negotiations were then opened, which resulted in the evacuation of Italy by Pyrrhus. . . . . Fabricius died as poor as he had lived, and left no dowry for his daughters, which the senate furnished."

On the crisis becoming acute, Austria perceived that, after all, it would be impossible for her to create a Customs-Union that did not include Prussia; and on the Eastern horizon there were now beginning to loom up events which induced Austria to relapse for the time being into the state of mind described by Bismarck when he wrote that "up to the year 1848 Austria allowed Prussian policy to prevail throughout Germany, in return for Prussia's support on all European questions." It would seem to have been mainly the necessity for reverting to this give-and-take arrangement that compelled Austria to yield the ground to her rival in the matter of the Customs-Union, which was accordingly re-constructed in April, 1853, on the understanding—embodied in a commercial treaty between the two leading Powers—that the question of Austria's admittance to it would be taken up half a dozen years later (1859). Prussia meanwhile thus remained mistress of the commercial field, and Bismarck counselled his Government to work for the dismissal of "Coalition" Ministers like Beust (Saxony) and Dalwigk (Hesse-Darmstadt), "so as thus to impress the public mind with the reality of our victory, and increase our future influence in Germany." His Government, however, content with the results already achieved, displayed no great desire to pursue the enemy which he had done so much to overthrow.

A Prussian victory, without a Parthian shot.

But what was the nature of the cloud, looming up on the Eastern horizon, which had induced Austria to bid for the support of her rival in her foreign policy by

making concessions to her in the field of domestic affairs? *

"*Cette politique va vous conduire à Jena*," haughtily remarked the French Ambassador at Berlin, M. le Marquis de Moustier, to Herr von Bismarck, in the spring of 1855. "*Pourquoi pas à Leipsic ou à Waterloo?*" replied the latter, with a lofty look, which caused Monsieur le Marquis to complain to the King, but unavailingly, of the arrogant rudeness of his Frankfort Envoy. Who, in Heaven's name, was Herr von Bismarck, that he should dare to speak to an Ambassador of Imperial France in this way? The policy referred to by the Marquis de Moustier was the attitude of Prussia to the Crimean war, a subject which mostly engaged the pen of the Prussian member of the Diet between the end of 1853 and the spring of 1856. The first impression produced by a perusal of his remarkable despatches on this question is that they, so to say, give a vividly clear picture of the confusion then prevailing in the councils and interests of the German States. But they also elucidate the motives which shaped the Eastern policy of Prussia —a policy which was severely criticised in proportion as it was misunderstood, and it was nowhere more misapprehended than in England. Bismarck, it is true, then only occupied a comparatively subordinate position in the service of his Sovereign. He was as yet more

Bismarck astounds the French ambassador.

* The following sketch of Bismarck's attitude to the Crimean War (as well as one or two other paragraphs in this chapter), is reprinted, with permission, from *The Times*.

the interpreter than the initiator of his actions. But still his opinions had great weight with his superiors, and even where he had no determining influence on the will of the Crown, it is interesting to trace the germs of his later public acts in the private views he then held.

More indifferent than the attitude of Holland to the Austrian War of Succession (so humorously described by Carlyle) was that of Prussia to the Crimean War. By strong pulleying and other drastic means the heavy-bottomed Dutch were at last hoisted to their feet, though "still in a staggering, splay-footed posture;" but by no ingenuity of diplomatic leverage could the Western Powers, in 1854, succeed in stirring up the Prussians, most practical of nations, to warlike action. More exasperating by far than crass Batavian lethargy was their "torpid response to Her Britannic Majesty's enthusiasm;" down again they flopped as low as ever, after, by immense exertions, they had been raised a few inches; stonily did they remain unmoved by "our double-quick Britannic heroism, which had to drop dead in consequence."

The "heavy-bottomed" Dutch and the practical Prussians.

That peculiar institution called the European Concert—the offspring of steam and telegraphy, at once the germ and only possible full-growth of a millennial court of international arbitration—had not yet sprung into existence. Yet the Crimean War witnessed its birth-throes, and was all but obviated by its infant efforts. Hitherto the public enemies of Europe had been coerced by the armies of

Birth-throes of the European Concert.

one Power, or by the united armies of several; but now a serious attempt was made to anticipate and achieve the work of war by substituting diplomatic concert for military coalition, or moral for physical force. And but for the backwardness of the German Powers, especially Prussia, there is little doubt that the effort would have been successful. It is singular that the statesman, who may now be called the diplomatic bandmaster of Europe, was one of the chief creators of the discord which then prevailed among the Powers. It is true, the part he as yet played in the international orchestra was a subordinate one; but, still, the jarring strains of his single instrument did much to mar the general harmony.

Prussia and the Eastern Question.

The line of action pursued by Prussia with respect to the Eastern Question was not straight; it was, indeed, very tortuous, but still it was not the devious track of a rudderless ship or of a State which had lost its way. She well knew whence she started and whither she was bound, and she was mainly guided by two great political landmarks—a desire, on the one hand, not to offend Russia, and a determination on the other not to be the humble and obedient slave of Austria.* The two motives were

* Says Herr (*Kreuz-Zeitung*) Wagener, in his Memoirs, with reference to a powerful speech he himself once delivered in the Chamber on the subject of Prussia's attitude to the Crimean War: "The Conservative party was by no means then guided by a blind prejudice in favour of Russia, but—to put it briefly—we were already Bismarck politicians, and acted on the assumption that Russia was at any rate not our worst and nearest foe, and that we could do nothing more foolish than elevate and strengthen the so-called Western Powers at the expense of Russia." And in his "*Politik Friedrich Wilhelm IV.*," the same well-informed writer says: "The

closely related, though to Bismarck only, and those who thought exactly like him, was the connection quite clear. The King was unwilling to break with Russia, mainly for the sake of the past; to Bismarck the past was nothing compared with the future, and he already foresaw that the benevolent neutrality of her neighbours was what Prussia at no distant date would sorely require. For if anything is clear from his Frankfort despatches, it is this—that there is a perfect unity of thought and action running through them all, and that they only, so to say, form the first chapter of a fascinating work of art whereof the author, unlike some writers of romance and even of history, had constructed a rough draft in his own large head before putting pen to paper. There was much more in what Herr von Bismarck said to the Marquis de Moustier than the latter dreamed. For, in truth, the Prussian Junker was already maturing those plans of action which should conduct Prussia to another Leipzig and another Waterloo, to a Sadowa and to a Sedan.

Prussia will be neither coerced nor cajoled.

On the Western Powers virtually finding themselves at war with Russia, Austria, who was eager to join the former, endeavoured to mould the Diet to her views and wishes; but she found Prussia intractable, and the other States timid.

motives which ultimately shaped our policy of non-intervention were the memory of our old companionship in arms with Russia against the Napoleonic France, as well as of the traditions of the Holy Alliance, together with a recollection of the iron egoism of England, of which Prussia, in the course of her development, had unfortunately received but too many proofs" (p. 72.)

On this, as on every other question of moment, the Diet again became sharply split up into Austrian and Prussian factions; and on the victory of one or the other depended the issue of peace or war for Germany. Bismarck was sent by the King on a special mission to the Courts of the Middle States in order to probe their inclinations. At Hanover he was heaped by King George—whom he was afterwards to depose—with so many hospitable attentions, that he could find no time to register the impressions which he had been sent to gather; while at Cassel, the Elector—with a caution characteristic of the feelings which were likewise to cost him his crown—only received the Prussian Envoy on being assured that he would not speak of the rumoured alliance of a Princess of Prussia with a scion of his house. He performed his mission with tact; but it is clear that, while merely professing to learn the views of the minor States, he did all he could to determine them. And he was already the sworn foe of Austria. Austria argued that Prussia had no right to act independently of her in the matter of the Eastern question. But Bismarck was resolved to change all that. On hearing that his Government had concluded with Austria the offensive and defensive alliance of April 20, 1854, he was furious.

"It was calculated," he wrote, "to disappoint the expectations of the German States and to discredit Prussia in their eyes, for they will now see that Austria is her master."

Among other means employed by the Western Powers to win over Prussia to their side, they had represented

the paramount interest of all the German States in the freedom of the Danube, but Bismarck, strange to say, was of the opposite opinion.

"Germany," he wrote, "has very little interest in the mouth of the Danube; but ten thousand times more in the Adriatic Sea, in the Morea, and in England's dominion over the Ionian islands. . . . . What has Austria done for us that we should do police service gratis for her?"

Unable to persuade Prussia by reason, the Western Powers had recourse to intimidation. Popular opinion in Austria and Prussia, they argued, was all in their favour, and the Poles in these countries at least would rise should their Governments refuse to draw the sword against Russia. Bismarck laughed to scorn such reasoning.

"The Western Powers," he wrote, "are not capable of insurrectionising Poland. The peasants of Prussia and Austria will not rise. It is not in the power of Louis Napoleon to let loose or restrain the Revolution in Germany or Italy at will."

Bismarck's personal influence on Prussian policy.

It may here be mentioned that at this time Bismarck was frequently summoned to Berlin from Frankfort to advise His Majesty and draft despatches—a proof that he had already acquired great influence over the mind of the King. It also appears that the Minister-President, Herr von Manteuffel, rarely committed himself to any important step—the April Treaty was an exception—without consulting his subordinate at Frankfort in whose judgment he had the greatest confidence, though the trust was by no means mutual. Now, it is clear

that any account of Prussia's attitude to the Crimean War, written without a due appreciation of these hitherto unknown facts, must present a distorted picture; and it therefore follows that, before the narratives both of Sir Theodore Martin and Mr. Kinglake can claim to be perfect, they will require to be re-written. "The King of Prussia is a reed shaken by the wind;" "the King is the tool of Russian dictation," wrote the Prince Consort in the spring of 1854. But that well-informed and penetrating observer had not yet discovered the existence of a power which was beginning to sway the will of Frederick William as much as the mighty Czar himself. Bismarck looked with anger on the arts of persuasion and menace employed to embroil his country in a ruinous war for the interests of others, and he has himself recorded that, if he had been the King, he would have repelled the advances of the Western Powers "in a very decided and disagreeable way," even at the risk of being excluded from the subsequent Congress of Paris, "whereby Prussia would have lost nothing." His attitude to the Crimean War was precisely the same as his standpoint during the Russo-Turkish conflict of twenty years later—one of strict neutrality, shaped by the conviction that neither Prussia nor Germany had the remotest interest in either quarrel.

Nor was he by any means alone in this belief. For this was almost the only question on which, when at Frankfort, he ever headed a majority in the Diet against Austria. What his colleagues in the Diet thought on the subject Bismarck reported to Berlin in the autumn

of 1854; and there can be little doubt that, in thinking as they did, they confessed themselves the proselytes of the political missionary of Prussia. The Principalities had been evacuated, but Austria, to all appearance, was still casting about for means of engaging the German States in a war against Russia. They reasoned thus:—

German proselytes of Prussia.

"Prussia has the same interest as we have in preventing Austria from going to war with Russia, and if she can only have the courage, she certainly has the power to do so. But when we see Prussia allowing herself to be carried along by a 'flighty and narrow-minded' man like Count Buol, who does not even consult her in decisive concerns before proceeding to action, we must think of our own security. If both the great German Powers sail under the guidance of Count Buol, it is clear that Germany will suffer shipwreck, since the certain consequence of an Austro-Prussian war against Russia would be the alliance of the latter with France, for which, as is credibly reported, the way is already paved, and which Russia in her extremity would purchase at any price. Confronted with such a danger the Austrian State would scarcely be able to hold together, for the French would find it easy to insurrectionise Italy, while the Russians have the choice of doing the same with the Slavo-Greek or Magyar races. In such a predicament Prussia and England could not help us, and if, therefore, the former cannot keep Austria from going to war, we shall certainly march with Austria and France as long as their paths coincide, but with France whenever she parts company with Austria and approaches Russia. The duty of self-preservation will not permit us to do otherwise, if Prussia does not make speedy and decisive use of her undoubted ability to prevent Austria from going to war. As yet Austria has not bound herself to such a step, nor will she do so, moreover, if she cannot rely on the support of Germany, but especially of Prussia."

About this time the King of the Belgians, who was naturally used as an instrument of the Court of St.

James, urged anew upon Frederick William the necessity of going hand in hand with Austria, "*même au prix de quelques sacrifices d'amour-propre de la part de Prusse*"; and Bismarck was informed that the King "concurred in the views of a Sovereign and a statesman whose oft-approved wisdom entitled his opinion to serious consideration." But Bismarck looked upon the "approved wisdom" of King Leopold, in this particular case, as mere shortsighted selfishness. "Had His Majesty," he wrote, "been King of Prussia instead of Belgium, he would have doubtless counselled otherwise." His Majesty had declared that, in the event of Prussia being attacked by France as the indirect consequence of her Eastern policy, England, "*peu fidèle à ses anciennes traditions*," would permit Napoleon, "*peutêtre même avec quelque satisfaction*," to seize the left bank of the Rhine. Bismarck effectually disposed of this threat by pointing out that the Power in possession of the Rhine would also be master of Belgium. "Let England and King Leopold think of that!"

Bismarck silences the King of the Belgians.

None were better aware than this monarch of the horror which Frederick William had of the Revolution, and as a last device he sought to work upon the fears of his royal cousin at Berlin by what Bismarck regarded as a mere "scarecrow argument." The detaching of Prussia from Austria, reasoned His Belgian Majesty, would re-expose the thrones of Europe to the disimprisoned forces of anarchy. Bismarck essayed to show that the

"Scare-crow arguments" cannot frighten him.

co-operation of these two Powers, to the extent demanded by the extreme advocates of an Austro-Prussian alliance, would incalculably increase the risks of a re-appearance of the Red Spectre. Russia, it must be mentioned, had by this time evacuated the Principalities, and Austria, flushed with the success of her action, had begun to hint even at the cession of Bessarabia. But Russia, argued Bismarck, would only yield to such a demand, even if it were backed by Prussia, after a long and unfortunate war which would give the Revolution far more chances of raising its head than the dreaded disunion of the leading German Powers. "I believe, therefore," he wrote, and his advice was taken by the King,

"that an adhesion to the (Eastern) policy of Austria will only advantage us in so far as it keeps her from attacking Russia. I am not one of those who identify our interests with those of Russia; on the contrary, Russia has done us much wrong, and we can knock the Revolution on the head in our own country, and in Germany at least, without Russia's assistance. Although a war with that Empire would be a serious matter for us, I should not attempt to say anything against it if it held out the prospect of yielding us a prize worthy of us. But the very notion appals me that we may plunge into a sea of trouble and danger on behalf of Austria, for whose sins the King displays as much tolerance as I only hope God in Heaven will one day show towards mine." And, again, after the war:—"The interest of Prussia is my only rule of action, and had there even been any prospect of our promoting this interest by taking part in the war, I should certainly never have been one of its opponents."

It were as tedious as unnecessary to detail the various devices employed by Austria and the Western Powers to drag Prussia into their service. They failed

to do so. The King was several times on the very brink of the precipice, but some friendly hand, not observable by the outer world, always drew him back. What is certain is, that the policy actually followed by Prussia before and during the Crimean War, with all her wavering and apparent duplicity, corresponded with the personal views of Bismarck; and there can now be little doubt that this policy was coincident with, because to a great extent the consequence of, these views. But who then dreamed that a certain Herr von Bismarck had already begun to mould the destinies of Europe? What European statesman then discerned aright the signs of the times? Well might the poor Marquis de Moustier feel no less bewildered than indignant when told to look out for another Leipzig and another Waterloo. For simply refusing to fight the battles of his neighbours, the King of Prussia was abused and bullied as if he had been the undutiful vassal of the Western Powers, instead of an independent Sovereign; but by the advice of his sagest counsellors, including his own conscience and his Frankfort Envoy, he remained firm. And every one is now agreed, to use the words of Leopold von Ranke, that his strict neutrality during the Crimean War was the condition precedent of the great achievements which afterwards made Germany one.

Prussia and the Crimean War.

The strained nature of the relations then existing between England and Prussia was well illustrated by an incident which, but for the friendly interference of Bismarck, would have ended in the recall of Sir Alexander

Malet, the British Resident at Frankfort. At a banquet (autumn, 1855) of Englishmen in Homburg in celebration of the fall of Sebastopol, Sir Alexander was reported to have expressed himself very strongly on the subject of Prussia's behaviour during the war, and the Press of Berlin cried out for vengeance. Bismarck first received notice of the affair on returning to Frankfort from a private trip to Paris, and he immediately put in a good word for his English colleague. He wrote to Berlin (Oct. 8th, 1855):—

Bismarck saves Sir Alexander Malet.

"May I take the liberty of suggesting that, in consideration of the personal qualities of the British Envoy here, we should take no official notice of the incident. Sir Alexander is an inoffensive character, and is more distinguished for calmness and moderation in the expression of his political opinions than many of his English colleagues. Indeed, he might well be reproached by his Government more with indifference than with *trop de zèle*; but, apart from the present Eastern Question, he is much more inclined to sympathise with Prussia than with Austria. Belonging to that class of Englishmen who are passionately fond of shooting and fishing, he does not, as a rule, take any very lively interest in political matters, and is delighted when business does not draw him away from his favourite pursuits. To me Sir Alexander has always been open and communicative. On the present occasion, too, without being able to remember exactly what he said, he expressed to me in private conversation his lively regret at the sensational and exaggerated dimensions which the subject had assumed, assuring me—and truly, I believe—that it would be contrary to his whole habit of mind to insult any foreign Government or friendly Sovereign in an intentional and deliberate way. The only result, if any, of our taking up and prosecuting the matter would be a change of English Resident here, an eventuality which I for one do not *à priori* regard as a desirable one. Indeed, if the newspaper reports are correct, which can scarcely now be ascertained, I am disposed to look at the whole affair

in the light of a hasty indiscretion committed *inter pocula*, from the consequences of which one ought to try and shield an otherwise agreeable companion (like Sir Alexander)."

But for the friendly offices of Bismarck, Sir Alexander Malet would certainly have paid for his imprudence with his post. As it was, he received a "severe reprimand" from Lord Clarendon, who remarked that, if the Prussian Government had seen fit to complain of his conduct, he would not have been able to support him (*qu'il n'aurait pas pu le soutenir*).

Some writers have laboured to show that one of the main causes of the Crimean War was Louis Napoleon's desire to distract the attention of his subjects at home by dazzling them with glory reaped abroad, and Bismarck also seems to have leaned to this opinion. From a "behind-the-scene Bonapartist," whom he had richly plied with wine, he extorted the confession that "the Emperor wanted a war."

Bismarck is presented to Queen Victoria and Napoleon.

"I cannot take it amiss," wrote Bismarck in April, 1855, "if your Excellency laughs at my thus seriously referring to these absurd fancies" (the possibility of the French compensating themselves for their failure to take Sebastopol by establishing themselves at Constantinople); "but from all I have heard about Louis Napoleon's character during the last few years from people who have known him for half a generation, it seems that the impulse to do precisely what no one expects of him is almost a disease with him, and is daily encouraged by the Empress.* A quiet old French diplomatist

* Compare this with what Bismarck wrote of Napoleon a few years later (June, 1857).—"In Napoleon III. the conquering impulse, as an instinct, does not seem to predominate (as it did with his uncle). He is no soldier (*Feldherr*), and in a big war coupled with great success or dangers, the eyes of the army—the support of his supremacy—would be assuredly

lately said to me: '*Cet homme va nous perdre. Il finira par faire sauter la France, pour une de ses caprices que l'Impératrice débite à son déjeuner; il faudrait leur faire un enfant pour les rendre raisonnables.*'"

As an illustration, on the other hand, of the feelings with which the activity of Bismarck was already regarded at Paris, may be quoted the fact that, in the spring of 1855, he was made the object of a violent personal attack by the official *Moniteur*. Bismarck and Louis Napoleon had already begun to study each other, and for this purpose a favourable opportunity was afforded them in the autumn of the same year, when the former visited Paris and became personally acquainted with the author of the *coup d'état* and the Crimean War.

"Hatzfeldt" (Prussian Ambassador at Paris), he wrote in August, 1855, "has been kind enough to ask me to stay a few days with him on my way" (to enjoy the sea-bathing at Trouville), "which will be a great treat ('*sehr interessant*') to me, as I shall thus be able to see something of the entertainments" (given by the French Emperor) in honour of the Queen of England."

On which subject Sir Theodore Martin remarks:—*

"Several of the guests" (at a great ball at Versailles, August, 1855) "were then presented to her Majesty (Queen Victoria), among others one who was afterwards to visit the halls of the palace of Versailles under very different circumstances—Count" (only Herr von, as yet) "Bismarck, then Prussian Minister at Frankfort. He is described" (in the Queen's Diary!) "as 'very Russian and *Kreuz-*

directed more towards a successful general than to the Emperor himself; so he will only have recourse to war when he thinks he is forced to do so owing to domestic dangers."

* "Life of the Prince Consort," Vol. III., chap. 66.

Zeitung,' and as having said, in answer to the Queen's observation, 'how beautiful Paris was'—'*Sogar schöner als Petersburg*' (even more beautiful than St. Petersburg)."

Napoleon's conversation with his distinguished Prussian visitor bore no traces of the displeasure which had vented itself in the *Moniteur* a few months previously.

"The Emperor," wrote Bismarck, "conversed with me chiefly about the King's" (Frederick William's) "health, and also paid me some flattering personal compliments. There was no mistaking it that we Prussians, in comparison with other foreigners" (Austrians especially), "were treated with great attention."

Sebastopol fell, the war came to a close, and diplomacy sat down to adjust the achievements of the sword. Prussia, who now wished to take part in the great game of politics without having, like the other Powers, deposited her stake, came and knocked at the door of the Peace Congress; but she was only admitted after, like an importunate beggar, she had waited some time without.* Much less apprehensive than the King about the dignity of Prussia, the patriotic heart of Bismarck was pained to see his country thus humbly suing for admission into the council-room of Europe, believing, as he did, that she would have suffered no great harm by remaining out of it. But she was at last permitted to affix her signature to the Treaty

Prussia and the Congress of Paris.

* "Prussia's participation in the Paris Conference—a matter in which the mere *point d'honneur* was the chief consideration for us—was opposed by Austria more persistently than by any other Power, with the object of lowering Prussia in the eyes of Germany by excluding her from the conclave of Great Powers."—Despatch of March 1858.

of Paris; and shortly after that document had been signed, Bismarck embodied his views on the general situation in a paper of such brilliant merit that his editor has called it the "*Prachtbericht*," or "Magnificent Report." * And, indeed, it well deserves the name, for it is impossible to conceive a more profound and statesmanlike essay. The Prince Consort was a master at this sort of thing; but let any one compare the political memorials of the Prince with the similar productions of the Prussian diplomatist, and he will see on which side lies the balance of depth, penetration, and practical sense.

Some of Bismarck's observations have now the force of fulfilled prophecy, for he clearly foretold the two campaigns which drove Austria out of Italy and Germany. As soon, he said, as Napoleon should find war more suitable to his purposes than peace, the state of Italy would furnish him with a cause of quarrel. But meanwhile the Emperor seemed to prefer peace, and all the Powers of Europe, great as well as small, vied with each other in their endeavours to secure the friendship of France. And Bismarck, too, like the political utilitarian he has always been, counselled his Sovereign to conciliate the upstart Bonaparte for all eventualities. The relations of Prussia with Russia, England, and Austria, were such that she could march with any of them as occasion demanded; but with France it was otherwise, and the possibility of at any time entering into an alliance with

Bismarck counsels a Franco-Prussian alliance

* April 26th, 1856.

this Power was what, in existing circumstances, would most advantage Prussia.* "Therefore, make hay while the sun shines; send one of your highest Orders to Paris, or even invite the French Emperor to attend a grand military review at Berlin, but by no means fail to win his favour," was the substance of what Bismarck wrote to Berlin. An alliance between France and Russia, he thought, was the most natural thing in the world, these States having no necessarily opposing interests; and in the event of its conclusion "with warlike aims," Prussia, he argued, ought not to be among its adversaries.

"For even if we were on the winning side, for what should we have fought? For Austrian preponderance in Germany and for the wretched phantom called Confederation! Every now and then for the last thousand years, and every century since the time of Charles V., German Dualism has settled its disputes by an internal war; and in the present century, too, this is the only way in which the clock of our development can be wound up and set. . . . *It is my conviction that at no distant time we shall have to fight with Austria for our very existence, and that it is not in our power to obviate this.* . . . And if I am right in this, though after all it is more a matter of belief than of proof, it is not possible for Prussia to carry her self-denial so far as to stake her own existence for the integrity of Austria in a struggle which I, for my part, cannot but regard as hopeless."

An ominous incident

Here we have the first clear enunciation of that policy of blood and iron which, ripened by the Crimean War, was destined to unify Germany. While the political constellation resulting from that war was taking shape, Bismarck, after a

* See p. 235, *post*.

careful review of the state of Europe, counselled the conjunction of the Prussian planet with the rising star of France as the likeliest means of eclipsing the Austrian luminary; and an incident occurred which seemed of happy omen for the result. When these thoughts were big within the mind of Bismarck, he rode out one day with his French and Austrian colleagues, and the latter received a severe kick from the horse of Louis Napoleon's representative which sent him groaning to his bed. To a man who has confessed his belief in the influence of the moon on the growth of human hair, in the mystic qualities of numbers, in the unluckiness of doing business on Fridays, and of thirteen sitting down to table, such an incident could scarcely fail to have been regarded as a sort of sign from Heaven.

A genuflecting "*troupeau.*"

The following story well illustrates that rivalry between the leading German Powers which was accentuated by their respective attitudes to the Crimean War, and which Bismarck already foresaw could only be settled by an appeal to the sword. During the peace negotiations Count Buol, Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, came to Frankfort on his way to Paris; and Count Rechberg, President of the Diet, thus craftily devised the semblance of a spontaneous demonstration of allegiance on the part of his colleagues, which should no less gratify his Austrian Chief than exasperate his Prussian rival. Each member of the Diet was taken apart, and told that Count Buol would be glad to see him after a certain sitting; and each member, fancying that this honour was specially

meant for him, repaired with hopeful alacrity to the residence of the great man. But Bismarck, resenting the impertinence of such an offhand invitation, and reasoning that if Count Buol wished to speak with him he could come to him and tell him what he wanted, took no notice whatever of the request. It was well he did so. For presently there came to him the French Ambassador, who said, "*En sortant de chez le Comte de Buol, j'ai trouvé dans l'antichambre tout le troupeau de la Diète rangé et surveillé par le Comte de Rechberg, et prêt à rendre ses hommages au Comte de Buol.*" Bismarck thanked Heaven that his sense of self-respect and his duty to his King had prevented him from joining this genuflecting "*troupeau*," and probably wrote to Berlin to ask how many bayonets Prussia, at a pinch, could bring into the field.

Prussia and Neuchâtel.

But if Prussia, for once, had succeeded to some extent in controlling the policy of Austria with respect to the Crimean War, the latter cast about for means of avenging herself on her presumptuous rival. And an opportunity for this purpose soon presented itself. By a process of historical and dynastic inheritance which we need not detail, the Swiss canton of Neuenburg, or Neuchâtel, had, in 1707, come into possession of Frederick, the first King of Prussia. As a feudal *enclave* of the monarchy, with special privileges of its own, Neuchâtel continued under a Prussian governor * till 1806, when it was ceded by Frederick

* English readers of Rousseau and Carlyle will remember that one of its Governors was the elder Keith, the exiled Earl Marischal, the only human being in whom Jean-Jacques, on his own confession, ever trusted.

William III. to Napoleon, who conferred it on Berthier as a sovereign principality. Reverting to the Prussian Crown by the first Peace of Paris, it was granted an oligarchic kind of Constitution, and received as a canton into the Swiss Confederation, while still acknowledging its vassalage to the Hohenzollerns. But this ridiculous twin relationship was not long in breeding discontent which, after various vicissitudes, at length expressed itself in the revolutionary year 1848 in a forcible deposition of the royalist Government.

A runaway province.

It was not to be expected that the pithless King of Prussia, who was unable to put down a rising in his own capital, should send a force to quell a revolt in Neuchâtel; nor could a mere paper protest achieve what bayonets did not try to accomplish. The gap between the kingdom and the canton grew ever wider. It is true that the Great Powers (by the London Protocol of 24th May, 1852) formally recognised Frederick William's claims to his runaway dominion, but what was the use of that when this dominion would not return to its beckoning lord? In the autumn of 1856 the Royalists rose and endeavoured to oust the Republicans, but the latter worsted the royalists and laid them by the heels. Whether the King's adherents acted by secret direction, or only with the connivance of the Berlin Government, is not certain; but in any case Frederick William now seemed firmly bent on defending those who had imperilled their lives by endeavouring to enforce his rights.

Berlin, accordingly, from its far-off bogs and sandy

wastes, imperiously demanded the release of the captives, while Berne, secure among its bastioned mountains, defiantly refused to set them free. Not by the representations of the Germanic Diet, nor by the advice of the Powers, nor even by the bullying of Napoleon *—who was vexed at the victory of Democracy at his own Imperial door—could the haughty mountaineers be moved from their firm resolve. Conferences were held, ultimatums were written, war-loans were raised, armies were mobilised.

Berne defies Berlin.

"I have hitherto met with no one," wrote Bismarck (22nd December, 1856), "who thinks it possible for us not to appeal to arms if the prisoners are not liberated before they are sentenced. Even Englishmen and Austrians like (Sir Alexander) Malet and Ingelheim (Austrian Minister at Hanover) admit that we cannot do otherwise without to some extent forfeiting our *prestige* abroad."

But while granting this, while admitting that Prussia had right on her side,

"Austria was at great pains to tie our feet with the federal rope ('*Bundeschlinge*'), in order to keep us from acting."

If Switzerland refused compliance with the just demands of Prussia, the latter proposed to despatch a military expedition to enforce her demands; but Austria raised all sorts of

Austria thwarts the warlike plans of Prussia.

* Wrote the *Moniteur* (17th December, 1856): "Ainsi la France a rencontré d'un côté (la Prusse) la modération, le désir sincère de terminer une question délicate, une déférence courtoise pour sa situation politique; de l'autre (la Suisse) au contraire une obstination regrettable, une susceptibilité exagérée et une indifférence complète pour ses conseils. La Suisse ne devra donc pas étonner si, dans le marche des événements, elle ne trouve plus le bon vouloir qu'il lui etait facile de s'assurer au prix d'un bien léger sacrifice."

subtle objections to the passage of this army of retribution through the federal (German) territory.* And for this policy of obstruction her motives were plain.

"It is said here," wrote Bismarck (16th December), "that Austria's hostile attitude to us in the matter is mainly due to jealousy of us, and the feeling that she would have to relapse into a secondary position while Prussia displayed her power (against Neuchâtel), and in doing so established closer relations with South Germany and France."

Austria herself a few years previously had been forced to stomach much from Switzerland in the matter of her quarrel with respect to political fugitives,† and she was anything but desirous to see Prussia adding to her *prestige* by bending the defiant Switzers to her will in a more successful manner than she had done. Again, Austria, who looked with a jealous eye on the growing intimacy between France and Prussia, lost no opportunity of trying to estrange two Powers who might one day make common front against her.

"In Vienna," wrote Bismarck, "they know full well that France would regard herself as having been left in the lurch if we do nothing to back up her unavailing intercession for us, and that Louis Napoleon's respect for our power, as friend or foe, would considerably diminish if our policy in this affair goes not beyond an interchange of words."

* "I hear from a good source," he wrote (19th December), "that Austria has taken steps at the Courts of Karlsruhe, Darmstadt, and Nassau, having for their object the obstruction of our march through the territories in question." And again, a few days afterwards, he reports having seen with his own eyes, for a few seconds only, an Austrian circular to the Powers calling upon them to prevent the march of a Prussian army through South Germany into Switzerland.

† From the canton Tessin.

Count Rechberg did everything he could to make his Prussian colleague suspect the sincerity of France, but Bismarck convinced himself by an interview with the French ambassador (Count Montessuy),

"that my Austrian friend had plucked out of the air all his material for exciting our distrust of France." "Austria," he wrote, "who on the occurrence of any event first asks how it can be turned to the disadvantage of Prussia, will be as pleased as Lord Palmerston if we do not get out of this business with honour."

And his lordship had scoffingly remarked :—

"The Prussians will incur much expense, and in January Switzerland will condemn the captives and then amnesty them; *donc la farce sera finie, et la Prusse y sera pour les frais.*"*

His lordship was not far wrong. In obstinately refusing, as they did, the unconditional surrender of the Prussian royalists, the Swiss were mainly influenced by the belief that Prussia would never execute, or be allowed by the Great Powers to execute, her threat of invasion; and it was characteristic of Bismarck that he never ceased urging his Government to take such measures as would undeceive the Cabinet of Berne. But his courage was tempered with a wise caution, and when at last Austria gave to understand† that, before Prussia could dare to take the field, the Neuchâtel question would have to be discussed by a Conference of the Powers interested in the treaty-neutrality of Switzerland, Bismarck, to

Bismarck's courage is tempered with caution.

* Reported to his Government by the Hanoverian Minister in London, and repeated to Bismarck.

† In a Circular of 23rd December, 1856.

obviate the danger of a coalition against his country, counselled his Government to postpone military action pending the deliberations of this European Areopagus. France even, who had acted throughout in a spirit of great friendliness to Prussia, began to hope that the latter "*s'arrêterait à la porte qui conduit à la guerre ;*" and accordingly she had to accept, with the best grace possible, the Conference of the Great Powers which met at Paris to avert war.*

During the sitting of this Conference, at which Prussia was represented by Count Hatzfeldt, Bismarck himself was sent on a secret mission to Paris, where he pretended to outsiders that the object of his visit was "a simple holyday trip of pleasure."† But his despatches show that he had much higher aims at the Court of Napoleon, and there is every reason to believe that he

Bismarck in Paris (1857).

* The Neuchâtel Conference which met at Paris, 5th March, 1857, under the Presidency of Count Walewski for France, was attended by Austria, England, Russia (Prussia and Switzerland being occasionally admitted with a consultative voice).

† It was during this visit to Paris that he wrote to his sister from "Hôtel de Douvres, April, 1857. I have five fireplaces, and still feel cold; five clocks going, and never know how late it is; eleven large looking-glasses, and my necktie is always awry. I shall probably have to remain here until Tuesday evening, although I am longing to get home. Since November I have not got out of this vagabondising life, and I have not had the feeling of regular and settled home-life since you went with Johanna to Schwalbach last summer. And now, in addition, they even wanted to summon me to Berlin about the salt-tax. Even if I had time, I could not take part in this debate. With my convictions I cannot vote with the Government, and if I joined the Opposition it would be hardly decent to ask for leave to desert my post *for that;* and viewing also the rumours touching my eventual entrance into the Ministry, about which Johanna, on the ground of your information, writes despairingly, they really might believe that I had views concerning all the humbug."

had been commissioned, among other things, to sound the Emperor as to the possibility of close co-operation between France and Prussia, independent of Conferences, in the matter of Neuchâtel. He himself, at least, once said:—*

"The Emperor was very kind and amiable on this occasion. It is true he could not grant the King's request for leave to march his troops through Alsace-Lorraine (against Switzerland), as that would have caused too much excitement in France; but in other respects he completely approved the enterprise, saying that he would only be too glad to see the democratic nest destroyed."

But the "democratic nest" enjoyed the protection of several of the great Powers, especially England, who, as Bismarck wrote, "was most emphatic in supporting Switzerland against our conditions, and Austria, of course, was always the first to back up England." Bismarck accordingly left Paris with the conviction that "for us, in the circumstances, acceptance of the settlement proposed by the Conference is a necessity." In a brilliant despatch,† brimful of the wisdom of expediency, he showed that—however degrading or disadvantageous it might be to Prussia—she had no choice but to act upon the counsel of the Powers, who would infallibly side with Switzerland in the event of their advice being rejected; and it was a point of honour with his Government that the captive royalists should at every cost almost be set free, without attaint of life or fortune.

He puts his pride for once in his pocket.

His Government acted on his suggestion. For a

* During the Franco-German war, as recorded by Dr. Busch.
† April 24, 1857.

money indemnity, which he generously declined to pocket, Frederick William IV. renounced all his sovereign rights to Neuchâtel, and his royalist adherents in the canton were liberated. But the incident preyed deeply on the sensitive spirit of the King. It drove a nail into his coffin. From Marienbad, where he released his Swiss subjects from their oath of allegiance, he returned to Berlin, only to betray symptoms of that sad mental derangement which soon deprived him of his sceptre, while granting him a brief further span of paralysed life.* As for Bismarck, while regretting the manner of the separation, he probably felt the same secret joy at seeing Neuchâtel severed from Prussia, as thrilled the hearts of all Englishmen when they finally got rid of such a bone of Continental contention as Hanover. But nevertheless it added to his already long list of grievances against Austria, that this Power had done all she could to force another humiliation on her hated rival.†

A nail in the coffin of Frederick William.

* *Aus dem Briefwechsel Friedrich Wilhelm's IV. mit Bunsen, von Leopold von Ranke, Leipzig*, 1873, p. 361.

† Referring to the Neuchâtel incident several years afterwards, Bismarck confessed that it was the only time he had ever made an attempt, but a vain one, to speculate in stocks on the strength of his knowledge of State secrets. He believed, he said, that Napoleon would express himself favourably to the object of his mission, and that this would mean war with Switzerland. On his way, therefore, from Berlin to Paris, he called at Frankfort on Rothschild, and asked him to sell out, for the fall, certain securities of his in the banker's possession. But Rothschild strongly advised him not to do this, as the bonds had good prospects, as would be seen. "Yes," replied Bismarck, "but if you knew what I know, you would think otherwise;" so in spite of all his banker's representations, he sold out and went off. He succeeded to his mind in Paris; but he had not

When in Paris (April, 1857), Bismarck certainly discussed the Neuchâtel question with Napoleon, but this was not the primary object of his visit to the French capital. That visit had been suggested to his Government by himself, and it was made during the Easter recess in order, as Bismarck said, that it might disarm suspicion of his aim by looking like a mere "holiday excursion." The Danish Question had now come to be one of the burning controversies of the hour, and Count Rechberg (for Austria) proposed that a Federal Commissary should be sent to Copenhagen for the purpose of seeking to bring the will of Denmark, on certain of its own constitutional affairs, into harmony with the wishes of Germany. Bismarck naturally desired that this envoy should be a Prussian, but it would only be courting a rebuff, he thought, to despatch him before his Government was assured of the probable success of his mission by knowing whether the Danes were being encouraged to resist the demands of the Diet by some foreign Power—for example, France. To Paris, accordingly, Herr von Bismarck journeyed at Easter, 1857, with the view of persuading Napoleon—

"That the integrity of Denmark was in his interest, but was nevertheless incompatible with the continuance of a democratic *régime* at Copenhagen." *

taken into account the policy of Berlin which meanwhile veered—probably out of timid regard to Austria—and the thing was given up. There was no war, the stock kept steadily rising in the market, and he could only regret that it was no longer his.—*Busch.*

* Despatch of 11th March, 1857.

And when closeted with the French Emperor he avowed that, on the whole,

"the maintenance of the Danish realm in its present extent was for us most desirable; and it was with regret that he beheld the Danish Government treading a path which must necessarily lead to the disruption of the State."*

But what, then, was this damnable and dangerous path of error which the Danish Government had begun to tread? In detailing the disputes which led directly to the Danish war of 1864 † we shall have ample occasion to acquaint our readers with the complicated nature of the Schleswig-Holstein question, but meanwhile we must anticipate so much of our narrative as will enable us to understand the policy pursued by Prussia with respect to the Elbe Duchies while Bismarck was still at Frankfort. We know that the force of events ultimately brought him to dismember the Danish kingdom, but in the period of which we are now treating he was even much more Danish than the Danes themselves as the champion of its integrity. To his mind every political combination that might be substituted for the Danish monarchy would prove much more inconvenient to Prussia than the Denmark of 1847.‡ The "monarchy-entire" § consisted of a Danish and a German element; and, in

Bismarck more Danish than the Danes.

* Despatch of 1st May, 1857.

† See Chapter VI. of this work.

‡ Despatch of 1st May, 1857, recording his conversation on the subject with Napoleon.

§ *Gesammt-Monarchie*, or "monarchy-entire," consisting of Denmark proper and Schleswig-Holstein, of which the population was mainly German. See p. 320, *post*.

the event of its disruption, the non-German portion would probably either fall under English or Russian influence, or be drawn into a Scandinavian Union which might prove disquieting and dangerous to Germany.

For these reasons Bismarck never hoped, from motives of selfish patriotism, that something would turn out to be "rotten in the State of Denmark;" and for the same reasons he had performed with a hearty will the duty—entrusted to him by the King of Prussia shortly after his first arrival at Frankfort—of inducing the Duke of Augustenburg to sell his reversionary interest in the sovereignty of the Duchies to the Danish Crown. For if, on the death of the King of Denmark, the Duke of Augustenburg were to reassert his claims to Schleswig-Holstein (forming part of the monarchy), what was to become of the Danish "State-entire," and all its advantages for Prussia? To the task of acting as "honest broker" between the Duke of Augustenburg and the King of Denmark, and of persuading the former to subordinate his personal interests to the peace of Europe, Bismarck devoted himself with a tact and patience which must command the admiration of all who read his numerous despatches on the subject; and on the last day of the year 1852 he was able to report to Berlin that ("yesterday in my own house," at Frankfort) the Duke had signed the formal renunciation of his sovereign and other claims in connection with the Elbe Duchies.

First experience as an "honest broker."

What came of this renunciation will be seen by-and-by; but meanwhile we need only remark that the destinies of the Duchies were now under the domination of two international agreements: the Treaty of London (8th May, 1852), which secured succession to the crown of the Danish "monarchy-entire" to Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sondersburg-Glücksburg; and a previous Convention (January, 1852) between Austria and Prussia (as mandatories of the Diet) on one side, and Denmark on the other, which, forming as it virtually did the consideration for the accession of Austria-Prussia to the Treaty of London, determined the relations of the Duchies to each other as well as to Denmark proper, while closely defining the power of the Danish Crown in its German domains. Most of the German Governments regarding the Treaty of London as an infringement of the rights of the Duchies, the Diet had failed to sanction that agreement; but, on the other hand, it had inconsistently ratified the previous Austro-Prusso-Danish Convention, although, as Bismarck wrote, there was only "one voice of regret on the subject in the Federal Assembly," which in the opinion of many "had given itself a death-blow by its yieldingness in the question of Holstein."

The Elbe Duchies and two international agreements.

But this yieldingness—as far as Prussia, at least, was concerned—had its limits, for when Denmark began to break her written promises to the two leading German Powers by altering her Constitution in a sense most despotic and

Prussia champions the integrity of Denmark.

deleterious to the population of the Duchies, Prussia stood forth as the champion of the oppressed German element in the Danish "monarchy-entire." Not that she yet wished to satisfy the national aspirations of that German element; but it was in her interest to help in alleviating the grievances of the Schleswig-Holsteiners to such an extent as would secure Denmark from the danger of disintegration arising from the discontent of her non-Danish subjects.*

"Apart from our interest in the preservation of Denmark," said Bismarck, to Napoleon, "it is a duty of honour with us to protect the German subjects of the King of Denmark against the oppression and constitutional wrongs from which they ought to have been secured by the (Austro-Prusso-Danish) agreement of 1852, and in the matter of which the Diet itself—on the ground of that agreement, as well as of other federal treaties—is bound to procure them relief."

Napoleon and the Schleswig-Holstein question.

Vowing that his only aim was to preserve the peace of Europe, Napoleon promised Bismarck to support the demands of Prussia at Copenhagen, "provided they were such as would not imperil the existence of the Danish monarchy," while reserving his liberty of action in the event of

* "The day before yesterday," wrote Bismarck, on 3rd July, 1857, "I called on my previous colleague at Frankfort, Prince Gortchakoff, and referred to the Danish Question somewhat thus: Prussia, I said, as well as Russia had an interest in maintaining the territorial integrity of the Danish monarchy, since everything that could take its place would be more inconvenient for us than the present Denmark, as long as it was properly governed. But the 'constitution entire' (*Gesammtverfassung*) was not so much a preserving as a disintegrating element, tending as it did to disrupt the State by embroiling Danes and Germans and making it incapable of surviving European crises. If Denmark was to be strengthened, the 'constitution entire,' and with it the dominion of democracy, must come to an end."

Germany having to enforce her claims by an appeal to arms. This was what Napoleon said in April, 1857, when sounded on the subject of Schleswig-Holstein; and the following was written by Bismarck about a year afterwards (30th June, 1858), when the Diet had already pointed its demands of Denmark with a threat of "federal execution:"

"In my opinion there is no ground for the apprehension that France in this question will seek a rupture with Germany. It is quite possible of course that, if she had the support of England, France might seek at a later stage to make with her a common demonstration in favour of Denmark. But if France wishes for a continental war in which she would not have England on her side, I cannot credit the Emperor Napoleon with unwisdom so great as to select the Holstein affair of all others as the ground of his aggression. If there is any question which precisely at the present moment would arouse the national feeling of all Germany and combine the German Governments against France, even against their will, it is surely that of Holstein. . . . Whoever, therefore, propagates the view that the French Emperor would select as the pretext for attacking us a question which for years has passed for the symbol of Germany's national honour, and been used as the readiest means of winning the favour of popular opinion, must have special reasons for exciting apprehensions of this kind or for slandering the common sense of the Emperor Napoleon."

Triumph of Bismarck's policy.

At first Bismarck felt inclined to counsel co-operation between Prussia and Austria, apart from the Diet, in the matter of the constitutional concessions to be wrung from Denmark with respect to the Duchies; but he soon found that the tendency of the Vienna Cabinet was to pursue a system of tactics similar to that which it had used in the affair of Neuchâtel, and at last he suggested to his Chief (April

16, 1858) the expediency of closing the correspondence between Berlin and Vienna on that subject:—

"It is precisely our many years' experience that Austria utilises every stage of this question to accuse us, to foreign Powers, of being peace-disturbers, and to Germany, of lukewarmness, which was one of the grounds rendering it desirable that we should transfer the negotiations and their responsibilities from the two Great Powers to the totality of the Confederation."

Into the hands of the Confederation accordingly the Danish question was committed, and at last, after a lamentable display of intriguing and disunion, it resolved, at the urgent instance of Prussia, to decree "federal execution" in the Duchies unless Denmark complied with its just demands. For Denmark, in the circumstances, there was only one way of answering this ultimatum, and that was by rescinding the various ordinances (of 1854, 1855, and 1856) by which she had broken her constitutional pledges with respect to Schleswig-Holstein-Lauenburg. Royal Patents to this effect were therefore issued from Copenhagen (6th November, 1858). Federal execution was stayed, and Bismarck was heartily congratulated by his colleagues in the Diet on the success which Prussian policy had achieved.* "And I think we are well entitled," he wrote, "to claim the honour of it."

* "I may mention to your Royal Highness" (the Prince Regent) "that after the sitting to-day (12th Nov.) I was heartily congratulated by several of my colleagues—including even some who had repeatedly opposed me in Committee—on the fact that the Diet owed this provisional result—so favourable to its own reputation—exclusively to the firmness and sagacity with which Prussia had conducted the whole affair, without allowing herself to be led astray by the diverse views of her allies."

By the country at large that successful policy had been interpreted as an effort on the part of Prussia to recover the popularity which she had forfeited in 1850 (Olmütz) by again handing over Schleswig-Holstein—after all its struggles to become free and German—to the tender mercies of the Danes. But to the practical mind of Bismarck the primary duty of his Government was meanwhile to secure the advantages arising from the continued integrity of the Danish "monarchy-entire," under conditions more just and tolerable to the German element therein. This, then, was the provisional solution of the Schleswig-Holstein question which Bismarck had been mainly instrumental in effecting during his tenure of diplomatic office at Frankfort; and we shall afterwards see that it was in endeavouring to effect a precisely similar solution of the same question when he had again to deal with it a few years hence as the director of his country's foreign policy that, strange to say, he produced results entirely the reverse of those at which he aimed—to the sore detriment of Denmark, but to the great advantage of the Duchies themselves as well as of the German nation. But of those results our readers shall hear enough anon.

Scope and meaning of his policy.

Shortly after receiving the congratulations of his colleagues in the Diet on the success of Prussia's policy in the matter of the Elbe Duchies, Bismarck was informed that the Prince Regent * (afterwards King

* Owing to the continued illness of his brother, Frederick William IV., the Prince of Prussia had been appointed Regent, on 7th October, 1858—

William) had been pleased (29th January, 1859) to appoint him Minister at the Court of St. Petersburg.

Appointed Minister at St. Petersburg.

For some time back he had been well aware that the inauguration of the "New Era" at Berlin, under the Prince Regent and his Liberal Ministers, would affect his position at Frankfort. Already on the 12th November, 1858, he had written to his sister :—

"I believe the Prince" (of Hohenzollern) "has been placed at the head of affairs simply to have a guarantee against party government and against a slipping away to the Left. If I am wrong in this supposition, or if they want to shelve me for the benefit of place-hunters, I shall retire under the guns of Schoenhausen, watch how they govern in Prussia with a majority of the Left, and endeavour to do my duty in the Upper Chamber. Change is the soul of life, and I hope I shall feel ten years younger when I find myself in the same fighting position as I held in '48 and '49. When I can no longer play the parts of gentleman and diplomatist at the same time, the pleasure or the burden of spending a large salary with distinction will not make me hesitate for a moment in my choice.* I have enough for the necessaries of life

a function which he exercised till his accession to the throne, 2nd January, 1861.

* Compare this with what Bismarck wrote in July, 1852, on the subject of certain rumours connected with his plans for the future, which he attributed to a half-jesting answer he had once returned to the question of Count Platen: "If I thought your Excellency would remain in office, . . . and again, who your successor would be? My answer was—Perhaps Rochow, perhaps Bunsen; that your Excellency, as I concluded from certain hints, would propose me as your successor if you resigned, and I were alive at the time; that his Majesty would probably not act upon your suggestion; and that my little castle in the air was, that I should remain three or five years more at Frankfort, and then as long at Vienna or Paris, and that I should afterwards be a famous minister for ten years, and die a country gentleman, if I might be allowed to paint my own future. . . . Your Excellency will excuse my candour if I say that I should be a fool to seek to exchange my present position (here at Frankfort) for that of a minister, apart altogether from the circumstance that if I suddenly felt a

and so long as God keeps my wife and children in good health, as he has done hitherto, then I will say *vogue la galère* in whatever channel it may be. Thirty years hence it will be a matter of absolute indifference whether I now play the part of diplomatist or country squire, and hitherto I have had more pleasure in looking forward to a keen and honest struggle, unhampered by the fetters of office, or, as it were, political bathing-drawers, than to an everlasting *régime* of truffles, despatches, and grand crosses. After nine all is over, says the actor. I cannot for the present tell you more than these, my own personal feelings; I myself have not yet succeeded in solving the riddle. I take a special pleasure in the Bund; all the members, who six months ago demanded my recall as indispensable to German Unity, shudder now at the very thought of losing me. * * calls up a reminiscence of '48 to frighten us, and they are like a dovecote that sees a weasel, so terrified are they at the idea of democrats, barricades, and parliament; while * * falls into my arms overcome with emotion, and murmurs with a spasmodic shake of the hand, 'we shall be driven once more into the same field.' The Frenchman, of course and even the Englishman, look upon us as incendiaries, while the Russian is afraid that the Emperor will follow our example and hesitate in his plans of reform. My advice to everybody naturally is, 'Be calm, and things will settle themselves,' and I receive the satisfactory reply, 'Ah, yes, if you stayed here, we should have a guarantee, but" . . . . . .

A month later (10th December), he again wrote to his sister:—

"Nothing more is said about my removal or dismissal. Some time ago it seemed certain that I was to go to St. Petersburg, and I had so made up my mind to this plan that I actually felt disappointed when I heard that I was to stay here. Politically speaking, we are going to have very bad weather here,

passionate craving for the (ministerial) crown of thorns, your Excellency would perhaps be the first to whom I should speak of this longing. I am sincerely grateful to your Excellency for the pleasant and honourable field of activity which I possess here, and I cherish no other wish than to remain where and what I am."

and I should like to have waited for that in bearskins with caviar and elk shooting. Our new Government is still invariably treated with distrust abroad; Austria alone, with calculating cunning, throws it the bait of her praise; while * * surreptitiously warns everybody against us, and of course his colleagues do the same at every Court. The cat won't leave the mouse alone. I don't think I shall come to Berlin this winter; it would be very nice if you would come and stay with me here, before I am 'placed out in the cold' on the Neva."

But what had induced his Government to "place him in ice" * on the banks of the Neva? The answer is that Europe was in a highly combustible state, and the Prince Regent doubtless feared that the continued presence of Herr von Bismarck at Frankfort would not be conducive to the pacific interests of Germany. Napoleon's famous New Year's message to the diplomatic world had gone forth; † Austria was on the eve of war with

Bismarck gives his arm to the Sardinian Envoy.

* "*Kaltstellen*," a word used of champagne when placed in ice.

† Writes Mr. Blanchard Jerrold in his life of Napoleon III.:—"On New Year's morning (1859), when the Emperor was receiving the customary congratulations of the Diplomatic Body at the Tuileries, he said to the Austrian Ambassador, M. Hübner, in the hearing of his colleagues: 'I regret that the relations between our two Governments are not more satisfactory; but I beg you to assure the Emperor that they in no respect influence my feelings of friendship towards himself.' These simple words, flashed about the world by the telegraphic wires, created a profound sensation. They fell upon Europe like shocks of earthquake. They were the certain first mutterings of a storm, which diplomatists had regarded as inevitable for some time past, but for which the outside world was not prepared, anxiously as the vast warlike preparations of France and Austria, and the recent military activities of Prussia had been watched. They heralded to Italy's master-mind at Turin the coming of his country's deliverance, and he said, quietly: '*Il paraît que l'Empereur veut aller en avant.*' The shock created in Paris, the disastrous fall in the funds, the immediate stop put to trade, the swift interchanges of diplomatic notes, the refusal of England and Prussia to promise neutrality, and the wild hopes which found expression among the

France and Sardinia; and Bismarck had shown in which direction his sympathies lay by ostentatiously walking down the chief street in Frankfort on the arm of the Sardinian Envoy, Count Barral. Austria naturally wished to attack, or await the attack of her Franco-Sardinian foes at the head of a united Germany devoted to her interests; but Bismarck would not hear of Prussia plucking the Austrian chestnuts out of the fire, and beheld in the difficulty of the Hapsburgs the opportunity of the Hohenzollerns. Now was the time, he argued, for Prussia to shake herself free of Austrian tutelage for ever.

Napoleon expresses the thoughts of Bismarck

But we cannot do better than convey his thoughts on the subject in the words of a Note written by Louis Napoleon in December, 1858, for the consideration of the Prussian Government:—*

Italian patriots, so startled the Emperor, that he hastened to protest that his meaning had been exaggerated."

* The Note in question was first published at Rome in December, 1880, by the *Minerva Review*, which gave the following history of the document. Shortly before the outbreak of the war of 1859, Cavour was anxious to ascertain what were the views of Prussia concerning the action he was preparing, and charged the Marquis Bepoli with the delicate mission of sounding that Power, on account of his family connections with both the Bonapartes and Hohenzollerns. Cavour's Envoy, therefore, started for Düsseldorf to spend the Christmas holidays with his brother-in-law, Prince Charles Anthony von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who had just been appointed President of the Council by the Prince Regent of Prussia, afterwards German Emperor. He, however, went round by Paris in order to have an audience of Napoleon III., who expressed himself most warmly favourable to an alliance between France, Prussia, and Piedmont. And that the Marquis should have something more substantial to aid him in his task than mere words employed in the course of a conversation, the Emperor embodied his views in an autograph Note, destined to be shown the Prince Regent by the President of the Council.

"There are two great German Powers, Prussia and Austria. Prussia represents the future, Austria the past. During the last ten years France has constantly shown a marked preference for Prussia; whether she will profit by it or not, is for the future to decide. Let us examine on which side the interests of Prussia really lie. That country, like everything growing, cannot remain stationary. However, if she allies herself intimately with Austria she is constrained to remain so, and even to retrograde. The most fortunate thing that could happen for her would be for her to counterbalance Austrian influence in Germany. But is that the only glory which should herald in a new reign in Prussia, with her noble and chivalrous instincts? I do not think so, for if Prussia follows the interested counsels which are given her by various Powers, her *rôle* in Europe must be limited to counterbalancing her rival; but in this policy there is danger. If, carried away by baneful influences, Prussia made common cause with Austria, and guaranteed the possession of the Italian provinces to the House of Hapsburg, the equilibrium would be destroyed, the treaties of 1815 abolished, and France would then be compelled, by appealing to Russia, to throw down the gauntlet to Germany. I trust that such an eventuality will never happen. If, on the contrary, Prussia silently detaches herself from Austria, and shows herself well disposed towards France, great destinies unattended with either danger or convulsions are in store for her; for if, in a struggle between France and Austria, this latter Power lost her influence in Germany, Prussia would inherit it; while, if Prussia allies herself with Austria, all progress is impossible, and she will risk bringing about an alliance between Russia and France against Germany. If, on the other hand, she allies herself with France, she will profit by every diminution of Austrian influence, and, with the support of France, be able to pursue in Germany the great destinies in store for her, and which the German people are desirous of seeing her attain."

Bismarck the supporter of France.

These were the words of Napoleon III., but they could not possibly have given better expression to Bismarck's own views of Prussia's policy and duty on the eve of the Italian war. For years back he had urgently counselled his

Government to court an alliance with France as the best means of rising superior to the domineering treatment of Austria.* In June, 1857, he had written in a brilliant "Memoir on Prussia's relations to France,"† a paper brimful of historical knowledge and political wisdom:—

"Louis Napoleon having been officially recognised by us as the Sovereign of a neighbouring State, it cannot seem in any way derogatory to our honour to enter with him into those relations suggested by the course of political events. In themselves these relations may not be desirable, but even if we wanted to form other intimacies it would scarcely be possible to do this without destroying the reality or the semblance of our friendship with France. It is only by this means that we can force Austria to abandon her over-ambitious Schwarzenberg policy, as it is also only in this manner that we can prevent the further development of direct relations between our Central States and France which might end in the complete dissolution of Germany. England, too, will begin to acknowledge how important Prussia's alliance is to her as soon as she is obliged to apprehend that she will lose it and that it will pass from her to France. Thus, also, if we want to effect a *rapprochement* between ourselves and Austria and England, we must begin with France, in order to bring those two Powers to a decision. . . But whatever side Prussia may be inclined to take in a future reconstruction of the European alliances, I should in every respect recommend her not to reject the present offers ('wooings') of France for our friendship, but on the contrary to give expression to the existence of more intimate relations between both Governments in a manner intelligible to all the Cabinets. And such a mode of expression would more particularly present itself in a visit of the Emperor Napoleon to Prussia."

It was for the reasons above set forth that Bismarck did everything he could to keep his Government from

* See p. 211, *ante*.

† Vol. IV. of his Frankfort Despatches.

assisting Austria—in never so indirect and passive a way, even—in her struggle with France and Italy. Already in 1856 he had written, as we saw,* that—

The sworn foe of Austria.

"It is not possible for Prussia to carry her self-denial so far as to stake her own existence for the integrity of Austria in a struggle which I, for my part, cannot but regard as hopeless."

And now he said:—†

To support Austria in the war would be political suicide for Prussia, whom the former was only casting about and biding her time to ruin. As for the apprehension of many, that after the conquest of Austria by France it would be Prussia's turn next, as in 1805-6—history, he argued, would never so repeat itself. "We shall never attack France, but if assailed by her we must defend ourselves, and if unable to do so, we should not deserve to be called a nation. Much greater is the danger of our being overcome by Austria. If we succeed not in expelling her from Germany, and she still retains the upper hand in it, our Kings will again become Electors and the vassals of Austria; and, if it is our aim to extrude her from Germany, we can only profit by Austria first being weakened by France."

Bismarck fails to breast the stream of the time.

On the same occasion Bismarck confessed his belief that he had no slight influence on the King (Prince-Regent) whom he had repeatedly tried to convince—and with apparent success—of the justness of the above views, though the

* See p. 212, *ante*.

† "*Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*" ("Recollections of my Life," printed in the *Deutsche Revue* for October, 1881) by Herr von Unruh, a political friend of Bismarck, who had a conversation with the latter at Berlin soon after the outbreak of the Italian war. Herr von Unruh found Bismarck in bed reading the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, which he threw aside on the entrance of his friend with the contemptuous remark that "this journal has not a spark of Prussian patriotism, urging, as it does, Prussia to support Austria against France and Italy."

subsequent reasoning of timid Ministers like Auerswald, Schleinitz, and Schwerin had filled His Majesty with paralysing scruples. On the King going to Baden, accompanied by his Ministers for Home and Foreign Affairs, Bismarck hastened after him with the intention of continuing his efforts against intervention, or even the semblance of such, in favour of Austria. But whatever weight Bismarck may have had with his royal master, His Majesty was still more under the influence of national opinion; and Germany was all but unanimous in pronouncing for the support of Austria against her French aggressor. The cause of Austria, argued the war-party, was a national one, but Bismarck was ready with his reply. "The word 'German,'" he said, "instead of 'Prussian,' I would fain see inscribed upon our flag when first we are united with the rest of our countrymen by a closer and more efficient bond than hitherto; the magic of it is lost if one wastes it on the present tangle of Federal affairs." He found it utterly impossible to breast the stream of the time, and by that stream he was swept into a quieter and less dangerous side-eddy at St. Petersburg.

He left Frankfort during the acute phase of the diplomatic period preceding the outbreak of the Italian war; but before quitting the post which he had so well and bravely held for eight long years,* he embodied the results of his experience in a report of such elaborate length and statesmanlike wisdom as procured for it among Prussian

He therefore writes a "Little Book."

* He was succeeded by Herr von Usedom.

diplomatists the name of the "Little Book."* As being nothing in the main but a recapitulation of those grievances which Prussia suffered at the hands of Austria, and which we have done our best to recount in the preceding pages, we need not trouble our readers with a summary of this "Little Book;" but the key-note of its complaints may be indicated by a quotation from another of Bismarck's despatches, written a year previously (March, 1858):—

"It is quite amazing what successes Austria achieves with her system of incessantly and uncompromisingly persecuting every diplomatist who dares to vindicate the interests of his own country against the will of the Vienna Cabinet, until, panic-stricken or weary of resistance, he submits himself to her dictation. There are but few diplomatists here who have not preferred capitulating with their conscience and patriotism, and relaxing their steadfastness as far as the defence of their own Sovereigns' and countries' interests is concerned, to contending, at the risk of their personal positions, against the difficulties threatening them on the part of so mighty, unforgiving, and unscrupulous a foe as Austria. Austria never gives any choice but this: unconditional surrender to her will, or war *à outrance*. I might, if I pleased, make my life as easy here as my predecessors did theirs, and, like the majority of my colleagues, manage all my business arrangements snugly and comfortably, and acquire the reputation of a *camarade supportable*, simply by committing high treason to a moderate and scarcely perceptible extent. But so long as I refrain from adopting that line of conduct I shall stand quite alone to resist every attack, for my colleagues do not dare to support me, even if they felt called upon to do so."

For the rest, the substance of the "Little Book" was repeated by Bismarck in his oft-quoted letter to

* The greater portion of the "Little Book," as well as the despatch above quoted, will be found repeated in "Our Chancellor," by Dr. Busch.

Baron Schleinitz, written a few days after the outbreak of the Italian war—on the day, in fact, when the Emperor Napoleon made his entry into Genoa (12th May, 1859)—in which he urged on his new Chief at Berlin the necessity of profiting by the European conjuncture to vindicate for Prussia her proper position of authority in the Germanic Confederation.

And prescribes a remedy of "Fire and Sword!"

"In Austria, France, Russia," he wrote, "we shall not easily find the conditions again so favourable for allowing us an improvement of our position in Germany, and our allies of the Bund are on the best road to afford us a perfectly just occasion for it, and without even our aiding their arrogance. . . . *I see in our relations with the Bund an infirmity of Prussia's, which, sooner or later, we shall have to cure 'ferro et igni,'* unless we take advantage betimes of a favourable season to employ a healing remedy against it. If the Bund were simply abolished to-day, without putting anything in its stead, I believe that by virtue of this negative acquisition better and more natural relations than heretofore would be formed between Prussia and her German neighbours."

"Fire and Sword!" This, then, was the means of solving the German question proposed by Bismarck when he left Frankfort; and we shall see that his belief in the efficacy of this, and no other remedy, for his country's ills grew in intensity till it expressed itself in a prescription of "Blood and Iron."*

* This latter phrase was first used by Bismarck when called to office at Berlin, as we shall afterwards see.

CHAPTER V.

DIPLOMATIC CAREER (*continued*).

2. *At St. Petersburg and Paris.*

"YESTERDAY," wrote Bismarck to his sister on the 1st of April, 1859, "I had a long audience of the Empress-Dowager, and was much pleased with the old lady's graceful and distinguished manner. To-day with the Emperor, so that I enter on my new functions just on my (forty-fourth) birthday." His journey from Berlin to St. Petersburg in the month of March had been well calculated to prepare him for the rigours of the Russian climate.

En route to St. Petersburg.

"The snow was so deep," he wrote, "that with six or eight horses we literally stuck and had to get out. The slippery hills were still worse, especially going down; we took an hour to advance twenty paces, while the horses fell four times, and got entangled with one another. Besides this we had night and wind, a real genuine winter journey. On my outside seat I could not sleep on account of the cold; but I preferred to be in the fresh air, and sleep I can make up later."

To complete this picture we may quote the following:—*

"He passed five days and six nights in the narrow carriage, without sleep, and at thirty degrees of frost, before he reached the

* "Bismarck in the Franco-German War," by Dr. Busch.

first railway station. But the moment he was in the railway carriage he fell so fast asleep that when he arrived at St. Petersburg, after a ten hours' journey, he fancied he had only stepped into the train five minutes before. 'They had their good side, though, those days before railways,' he went on; 'one had not so much to do then. The post-day only came round twice a week, and then we worked with might and main. But the moment the mail was off we got on horseback again, and had a good time till next post.'"

A Russian view of Bismarck.

At St. Petersburg Bismarck remained "out in the cold" from the spring of 1859 till the spring of 1862—in all, therefore, about three years; but unfortunately the despatches he wrote during his sojourn in the Russian capital have not yet, like his Frankfort reports, been given to the light. We cannot do better, however, than characterise the impression he made upon his Russian hosts, as well as the general scope of his diplomatic activity during his mission in Moscovy, in the words of a writer who had every opportunity of being an accurate recorder:*

"Circumstances of the most various kind contributed to make Bismarck's *entrée* into St. Petersburg society pleasant and successful. It was known that the new Envoy was a warm admirer of the late Emperor (Nicholas), and, as such, an opponent of the anti-Russian Liberalism of Berlin. It was further known that during his stay at Frankfort he had been the persistent adversary of his Austrian colleague, and that in spite of the Austrian sympathies of most of his

* "*Aus der Petersburger Gesellschaft; Neue Folge* (*Leipzig*, 1881)," being a continuation of the work which has been translated into English as "Distinguished Persons in St. Petersburg Society." The author is Dr. Julius Eckardt, a Baltic-province (German) Russian, who, after a varied journalistic and literary career in Russia and Germany, ultimately entered the service of his patron, Prince Bismarck, in the Foreign Office at Berlin as chief of the Prussian Press Bureau, and after several years in this capacity was appointed to succeed Dr. Nachtigal as Consul-General at Tunis.

friends and partisans he had quitted the Federal City as the sworn foe of the House of Hapsburg. That was the best introduction which Herr von Bismarck could have brought with him, for hatred of our 'ungrateful' *protégé* of 1849 was then the password of our society, as well as of our diplomacy and its new leader, Prince Gortchakoff. There was no need of quoting the good relations which had existed between the Russian and the Prussian Envoys at the (Germanic) Diet; the new-comer could not be better recommended than he had already been by his antecedents. But even a few months after entering on his post, the Prussian Minister had more than answered to the expectations that were entertained of him. Not to speak of Gortchakoff and Westmann, who were most highly edified with the sentiments which Herr von Bismarck had brought with him and took every opportunity of expressing, society was unanimous in declaring that this diplomatist formed a marked contrast to his stiff, would-be well-bred, buttoned-up, and pretentious predecessors, and that he was a veritable '*homme du monde.*' The fresh, unconstrained, and yet self-possessed manner of the new-comer accorded in every respect with the social demands of our aristocracy. Instead of the anxious precision which we had been accustomed to expect from German statesmen, Herr von Bismarck displayed an ease and affability that facilitated official as well as private intercourse with him, and rendered ceremony unnecessary. Business people were impressed with the offhand readiness of the diplomatist who proved himself at home on every subject; while the lions and lionesses of our drawing-rooms were charmed with the unfailing good temper, the flowing wit, the distinguished yet simple manners, and the excellent French of the man of the world. . . . Here, at last, was a German with whom we could associate as easily and pleasantly as with other people; who gave himself the rein, being certain of his ability to pull himself up; who dictated the tone to society instead of mimicking it; who had self-respect enough never to bore himself or others with superfluous pretensions. Our overweening aristocracy, accustomed to look down upon everything German, and to consider itself superior to all others, joyfully recognised him as one of its own caste. Herr von Bismarck maintained unaltered the confidential relations to the Imperial family enjoyed by his predecessors, freeing them, however, from all *inconvénients* as far as he was con-

cerned, and establishing himself on the same footing as that occupied by the Ambassadors of the Great Powers. He was at once an Imperial family-friend and the representative of a powerful, independent State whose dignity could not be sacrificed under any circumstances whatsoever.

"The tall figure of the Prussian Minister, who showed himself almost daily on horseback, soon became familiar and welcome to the whole city. No other foreign diplomatist was more warmly received by the Emperor, or so frequently invited to the weekly Court-hunts as Herr von Bismarck, who was not only a sportsman but also a genuine lover of nature. The Prussian Legation—theretofore the abode of decent dulness, the scene of rare and then pretentious entertainments—now became one of the most charming and frequented resorts in the capital. Everybody knew that the Prussian Envoy was unable to compete with his French, English, and Austrian colleagues in splendour and display; but everybody also agreed that this drawback could not have been more happily and gracefully dealt with than it was by Herr and Frau von Bismarck.

"Instead of anxiously seeking to conceal how limited were the means at the disposal of the Prussian Legation, or to deceive the world by occasional outbursts of prodigality, Frau von Bismarck frankly avowed that she neither could nor cared to pay forty silver roubles for a dish of asparagus, or expend the salary of her husband in dress and diamonds. . . . The little dinners and evening receptions at their house soon became more sought after than the wearisome *fêtes* with which other diplomatists ruined themselves; and the most exacting critics were obliged to confess that no Embassy entertained so agreeably as the Legation in the Stenbock Palace. As we had heretofore had to do with German statesmen who either repudiated their national customs and language in favour of French ways and speech, or else were obtrusively and fulsomely ultra-German in their behaviour, we welcomed in Herr von Bismarck a diplomatist who combined the Prussian-German, proud of his country, with the gentleman in a natural and elegant manner that was admirably suitable to the forms of intercourse obtaining in Court and diplomatic circles. . . . So well, indeed, did he perform his functions as representative of a great Protestant-German Power that he was soon looked up to with pride, not only by the Prussian subjects in St.

Petersburg committed to his care, but also by all the Germans living in that capital. Without coming into conflict with our curt and exacting domestic authorities, Herr von Bismarck contrived to enforce as much respect for his claims as was paid to those of the English Ambassador and other diplomatists jealous of the rights of those under their charge. It was little wonder that he soon became well-known to all the Germans throughout the (Russian) Empire.

"Perhaps the foremost prophets of Bismarck's mission were the Baltic-Province Barons (of Esthonia and Courland) who belonged to the inner family circle of the future Chancellor, drank, and talked politics with him, and frequently invited him to hunt on their estates. . . . The Russian Chauvinists were flattered by seeing that the 'true German Baron,' which Bismarck affected to be, followed with much closer attention than any of his colleagues the new liberal movement in our Press and literature, and that he shrank not from the task of learning as much of our difficult language at least as enabled him to make himself understood to people ignorant of French, and accost the Emperor now and then with a Russian phrase. But not only in all classes of society with which he came in contact was he welcomed and beloved; our statesmen also, and those who knew more of him, recognised in him a genius of extraordinary clearness, if perhaps somewhat eccentric. Berlin diplomatists, of all others, we had never been accustomed to hear expressing views different from those of their Court, or criticising the acts of their Government, or betraying an inclination to pursue a policy of their own. But this was precisely what was done by the extraordinary man, who in everything seemed so different from his predecessors, with an outspokenness which excited the admiration of the initiated, while not exceeding the limits imposed by his position upon the Minister of a foreign Court. Regardless of the fact that the Prince-Regent (of Prussia) exhibited the most decided distrust and dislike of France and her Italian policy, . . . Herr von Bismarck confessed his conviction that the liberation of Italy from Austrian influence was a European necessity, which only formed the first stage in the emancipation of Germany and Prussia from the patronage of Vienna. Even after the mobilisation (of the Prussian army) in the summer of 1859, he continued to maintain good relations with his French colleague as far as was possible and fitting in the circumstances, and

sought to keep the ground free for a Franco-Russo-Prussian Alliance. And on his leaving St. Petersburg, after a stay of three years, every one was agreed that the Prussian Envoy was a man who would have to play a very considerable *rôle* in the history of his country, and carry out a portion, at least, of the programme which he had always avowed with unexampled candour. It is true that we only knew one point in this programme —the necessity of Germany and Prussia being freed from Austrian tutelage. But that was quite enough to ensure for the man who went to the helm of affairs in Prussia, six months after his departure from St. Petersburg, the sympathies of the Czar, his Chancellor, and other numerous personages of high station. The great and important part played in Prussian history by the Russian alliance for the next fourteen years was most successfully prepared by Herr von Bismarck's activity at St. Petersburg."

A Court favourite.

The "Sketches of St. Petersburg Society," from which we have made the above extract, are brilliant and interesting enough in their way; but we are sure that their author will be thrown into the shade when the time comes for the publication of the social and diplomatic portraits thrown off by Bismarck himself during his stay at St. Petersburg, in the manner of his Frankfort etchings. Meanwhile, it is only from his private letters that we can judge of what he thought of men and things in Russia, and his estimate is invariably favourable; as, indeed, it could not well have been otherwise, considering that he himself was such a favourite with all classes of society, especially with the Court.

"They are very kind to me here," he wrote, "but in Berlin Austria and all the dear brothers of the Bund are intriguing to get me away, and yet I am so well-behaved. As God will, I should like to live in the country quite as well. . . . .

"I had to go three successive days to Zarskoë-Selo, which takes

always the whole day. I dined recently with the Emperor, dressed in the clothes of four different persons, as I was not prepared for evening dress; my get-up was very curious."

The Empress-Dowager.

With the Empress-Dowager he was an especial favourite, and a few weeks after his arrival in St. Petersburg he wrote from Peterhof, the Czar's charming summer-retreat on the Gulf of Cronstadt:

"I drove over early this morning to say good-bye to the Empress-Dowager, who sails to-morrow. In her amiable naturalness of manner she has, I think, something really motherly, and I can speak out to her as though I had known her from a child. To-day she talked for a long time, and on many subjects, with me. Dressed in black, she lay on a couch, on a balcony looking out on green trees, knitting a red-and-white woollen shawl with long needles, and I could have listened to her deep voice and true-hearted laugh and scolding for hours, it seemed so like home to me. I had come for a couple of hours, and in evening dress; but when at last she said that she did not want to say good-bye to me yet, but that probably I had a lot to do, I assured her, 'Not the slightest;' and she replied, 'Then stay here, and see me off to-morrow.' I was delighted to accept the invitation as a command, for it is charming here, and so stony in St. Petersburg."

Bismarck and the Czar.

Bismarck was just the sort of man to find favour in the eyes of an autocrat like Alexander, the Czar of all the Russias:

"To-day (13th July, 1860) I was invited to dinner here (at Peterhof). . . . . The Emperor was very cordial at our meeting, embraced me, and showed a sincere and unmistakable pleasure at seeing me again."*

* Dr. Busch has recorded the following anecdote which Bismarck once told about his experiences at the Court of Russia: "The Count was once walking in the summer-garden at St. Petersburg with the Emperor. They came to an open lawn, in the middle of which stood a sentry. Bismarck

Their last meeting had probably been at Lazienki (the residence of the Czar at Warsaw), where Bismarck wrote (19th October, 1859):

"Yesterday I spent the whole day *en grandeur*, breakfast with the Emperor, then an audience, just as gracious as in St. Petersburg, and very confidential; dinner with his Majesty, theatre in the evening, a most excellent ballet, and all the boxes full of lovely women."

In Poland.

During this autumn the Czar and the Prince-Regent of Prussia met at Breslau to discuss the European situation as affected by the Italian war, and Bismarck had been commanded to accompany His Russian Majesty.

To his wife he gave an amusing account of his reception at Lazienki, where "what can be done (for us) is done, and for amusement-loving people it is here like being in Abraham's bosom."

"So far they have me. Early this morning I was looking for the ticket office at the first Polish railway station, to book on here, when all of a sudden a well-meaning fate in the form of a white-bearded Russian General seized hold of me. This angel is called P., and before I had properly come to my senses, my passport had been snatched from the police, my luggage from the custom-house officers,

took the liberty of inquiring what he was there for. The Emperor did not know, and turned to the adjutant, and he did not know. Then they asked the sentinel, who said nothing but 'Ordered'—Bismarck gave the Russian word for it. This was no help, and the adjutant was directed to make further inquiries of the guard and the officers. He always got the same answer, 'Ordered.' Search was made in the military records, but nothing found—there always had been a sentinel there. At last they found an old servant who remembered that his father, also an old servant, had once told him that on that spot the Empress Katherine had found an early snowdrop, and had given orders to protect it from being plucked. There was no better way of doing so than by placing a sentry there, and placed he was at once."—"*Bismarck in the Franco-German War.*"

and I had been transplanted from a slow to a special train, and sat with one of this amiable gentleman's cigars in my mouth, in an imperial saloon carriage. After an excellent dinner at Petrikau, I reached here and got separated by the golden crowd from Alexander and my luggage. My carriage was waiting, and the questions which I shouted out in several languages, as to where I was to stay, were lost in the rattle of the wheels, with which two fiery stallions galloped me off into the night. For about half an hour I was driven in mad haste through the darkness, and now I am sitting here in uniform and wearing the decorations which we all put on at the last station. Tea is at my side, a looking-glass in front of me, and I know nothing, except that I am in the pavilion of Stanislaus Augustus in Lazienki, but where it is situated I haven't an idea."

Hunting.

From Lazienki Bismarck went with the Emperor to shoot in the game-stocked park of Castle Skiernievice, or Skianiawicze, as he writes it—a spot he was destined to revisit after the lapse of a quarter of a century under very different circumstances. "Shot fallow deer for five hours," he wrote from Skiernievice; "then hunted four hares; on horseback for three hours. Did me a world of good." To Bismarck one of the chief attractions of Russia was the excellent sport it afforded him, and he was frequently absent from the capital in quest of the elk, the bear, and the wolf.* Clad in his furs and his seven-league boots,

* Hesekiel tells the following story of Bismarck's prowess with his rifle in Russia: "On their return from hunting one of the party was asked, 'How did things go?' and he replied, 'Very ill with us, father. The first bear trotted up; the Prussian fired, and down fell the bear. Then came the second, and I fired, missed, and Bismarck shot him dead at my very feet. Then came the third bear; Colonel M. fired twice and missed twice; then the Prussian knocked him over with one barrel. So Bismarck shot all three, and we could get no more. It went very ill with us, father!'" Bismarck himself, according to Dr. Busch, once told a similar story. He was one day, in Finland, in considerable danger from a

he looked like a pristine denizen of those dark Slavonian forests. Of no Englishman more than of Bismarck then could it be said that his first remark on rising was, "What lovely scenery! what shall we kill to-day?" "I am only well when out shooting," he wrote (March, 1862); "as soon as I get into balls and the theatre here I catch cold, and neither eat nor sleep." Once during the French war he said to his cousin, who was complaining of not feeling very well: "When I was thy age" (his cousin was about thirty-eight) "I was quite intact, and everything agreed with me. It was at St. Petersburg that I got my first shake."

He had not, indeed, been many weeks in the Russian capital when he wrote to his sister (June, 1859):—

"Last week I could do nothing, and lay helpless on my back. I have never been really well since January in Berlin, and annoyance, climate, and cold have driven my once trifling rheumatism to

huge bear, which he could not see plainly as it was covered with snow. "At last I fired," he said, "and the bear fell, about six steps in front of me. He was not dead, however, and was able to get up again. I knew what was the danger, and what I had to do. I did not stir, but loaded again as quietly as possible, and shot him dead as he tried to stand up." Once he wanted to go on a bear's hunt down the Dwina to Archangel, but his wife would not let him; besides, he would have been obliged to take at least six weeks' leave. In the woods up there, he said, was an incredible quantity of game, especially blackcock and woodcock, which were killed in thousands by the Finns and Samoyeds, who shot them with small rifles without ramrods, and bad powder. "A woodcock there," he added, "lets itself, I will not say be caught with the hand, but killed with a stick. In St. Petersburg they come to the market in heaps. On the whole a sportsman is pretty well off in Russia, and the cold is not so bad, for every one is used to struggling with it. All the houses are properly warmed, even the steps and the porch as well as the riding schools, and no one thinks of visiting with a tall hat in winter, but goes instead in furs with a fur cap."—"*Franco-German War*"

such a pitch, that I have the utmost difficulty in breathing, and only find it possible at all after very painful efforts. My complaint, which is rheumatic-gastric-nervous, was located in the neighbourhood of my liver, and had to be fought with huge cupping-glasses as big as saucers, cantharides, and mustard all over my body, until at last I succeeded, after I had almost been gained over for a better world, in convincing my doctors that my nerves had been weakened by the uninterrupted anxiety and continual excitement of eight years, and that further letting of blood would in all probability result in typhus or imbecility. A week ago yesterday it was at its worst, but my excellent constitution very rapidly began to recover, when I was ordered to drink champagne in moderate quantities."

In the autumn of the same year he returned to Berlin in a very prostrate condition, but a fortnight at Baden brought him some relief:—

"My left leg is still weak and swells when I walk, and my nerves have not yet recovered from the iodine poisoning. I still sleep badly, and to-day, after all the people and things I have spoken to and about, I am languid and irritated; I don't know why. My views of life, however, have changed during the last six weeks, for then I did not care to live any longer, and the people who saw me here then say that they never expected to have that pleasure to-day. 'All Prussian ambassadors die or go mad,' says * * to me, with a look, which is evidence of the truth of his words. But so do other people."

About a year later he wrote again from St. Petersburg (July, 1860):—

"My health has been unexpectedly good since I have been in my own house. . . . . I feel like an old pensioner, who has finished with the business of this world, or like a once ambitious soldier, who has reached the haven of a good command. I could spend many happy years here in ripening towards my end. Every morning I am busy with drinking Carlsbad water, walking, breakfasting, and dressing. After that my profession gives me quite enough work to save me from feeling a burden on the

Daily habits.

world. I enjoy my dinner immensely, especially that which I am not allowed to eat. I ride from eight to ten, *par ordonnance du médicin*, then, until twelve, I read newspapers and despatches, with the accompanying enjoyment of common hospital 'prunes.'"

As to the nature of his functions, mode of life, and social environment in St. Petersburg, let Bismarck again speak for himself:—

"As far as business is concerned my position here is very pleasant, but 40,000 Prussians, to whom one acts as police, lawyer, judge, conscription agent, and provincial magistrate—twenty to fifty signatures daily, not counting passports—involve a great deal of work. My house is big enough, and well situated on the Neva; three large reception rooms—one of them with parquet-floor, mirrored doors, and silver sconces, I have converted into my office."

And again, more than a year later (December, 1860):—

"I have indeed very much to do. We are not at all sociable here; my means will not allow it. In other houses I catch cold, and generally speaking an income of 80,000 thalers condemns a man here to too great economy.* I invite people to dinner,

* Once during the Franco-German War, according to Dr. Busch, Bismarck asked General Werder (Prussian representative at St. Petersburg) what every visit to the Emperor might cost him now. "In my time," said the Chancellor, "it was always a pretty dear thing, especially in Zarskoë. I had always at that time to pay fifteen or twenty, sometimes five-and-twenty roubles, according as I went at the request of the Emperor or on my own account. In the former case it was dearer. The coachman and footman who had fetched me, the house-steward who received me—and when I had been invited he had his sword at his side—the runner who preceded me through the whole length of the castle to the Emperor's room—and that must have been a thousand yards—all had to get something. You know of him, of course, the fellow with the high round feathers on his head, like an Indian. He certainly earned his five roubles. And I never got the same coachman to take me back again. I could not stand these drains. We Prussians had very poor pay—25,000 thalers (£3,750) salary,

i.e., to take pot-luck with me, but I give no soirées. Mourning prevents evening receptions, theatres, &c.; carriages, coachmen, footmen are all draped in black. I have been shooting once, but found the wolves too clever for the huntsmen; still I am very glad that I can stand it again."

"My everyday life does not allow me much rest, but claims me from the moment of my first breakfast cup until four, with work of all kinds, on paper and with mankind. Then I ride until six; after dinner, at my doctor's request, I only approach the inkstand with the utmost care, and in cases of extreme necessity. On the other hand, I read everything that reaches us in the way of despatches or newspapers, and at midnight I go to bed, as a rule, amazed and reflective at the extraordinary claims which Prussia makes on her ambassadors in Russia.* . . . . . Thank God I now (Oct. 1860)

8,000 thalers (£1,200) for rent. No doubt I had a house for that as big and fine as any palace in Berlin. But the furniture was all old, faded, and shabby, and if I count in repairs and other expenses, it came to quite 9,000 thalers (£1,350) a year. I found out, however, that I was not expected to spend more than my salary, so I economised by keeping no company. The French Ambassador had £12,000 a year, and was allowed to charge his Government with the expense of all company which he could at all consider official." . . . "It is the same thing in Berlin. A Prussian Minister gets 10,000 thalers (£1,500), while the English Ambassador gets 63,000 (£9,450), and the Russian 44,000 (£6,600); then he charges his Government with the expense of all official entertainments, and when the Emperor stays with him he usually gets a full year's extra salary. No wonder we cannot keep equal pace with them."—"*Bismarck in the Franco-German War.*"

* Bismarck once told a story illustrative of the "curious claims" made upon him while Minister in Russia: "One day there came into our Chancery a Jew, who wished to be conveyed back to Prussia. But he was very ragged, and had particularly bad boots. He was told, yes, he should be taken back. But he wished first to have another pair of boots, claimed them as a right, and behaved so boldly and impudently, shrieking and using violent language, that the gentlemen of the office did not know what to do with him. Even the servants did not feel safe with the raving fellow. At last, when the thing got too bad, I was summoned to give aid in person. I told him he must be quiet, or I would have him locked up. He answered defiantly: 'You cannot do it, for in Russia you have no such power.' 'We shall see,' said I. 'I am bound to send you home, but I feel no call to give you boots, though I might have done so had you not behaved so outrageously.' I then threw open the window and beckoned to a Gorodo-

feel much better than I did in the spring, but I have not yet very much faith in my health; and court life in St. Petersburg, with its balls till three o'clock every day, and its never-ending restlessness, is a severe strain even on healthy men. After my many wanderings about since the beginning of '59, the feeling of once more really living with my own family is so pleasant, that I am scarcely yet rid of my home-sickness; any way, I should like to lie quiet like a badger in his hole till summer comes again."

A few months later (March, 1861), he wrote:—

"Altogether I am quite satisfied with my life here, and find the winter not nearly so bad as I expected, and do not desire any change of position, until, when God wills it, I settle peacefully in Schoenhausen, or Reinfeld, to let my coffin be built without excessive haste. The ambition to become Minister leaves one now-a-days for a variety of reasons, which cannot all be expressed in writing; in Paris or London, I should have a less comfortable existence than I do here, should have no more voice in affairs, and a change of residence is half death. The protection of 200,000 loafing Prussians, one-third of whom live in Russia, while two-thirds visit it yearly, gives me enough to do to save me from being bored; my wife and children stand the climate very well. I have a number of pleasant companions, now and then I shoot a small bear or elk; and the last 290 versts from here is an excellent track for sleighing. I avoid going into grand society every day, for it does not in the slightest benefit the King's service, and I cannot sleep if I go to bed so late. One cannot very well appear before eleven, most people come at twelve

woy, or Russian policeman, who was stationed a little way off. My Jew went on shrieking and scolding till the policeman, a big strong fellow, came in. To him I said" (some Russian words, not translated), "and the big policeman carried off the little Jew, and put him in prison. The morning after next he came back, quite a different man, and declared himself ready to go without new boots. I asked him how he had got on in the meanwhile. 'Badly—very badly!' 'What had they done to him?' 'Ah! they had—they had actually—ill-used him personally!' I expressed my regrets, and asked whether he would like to make any complaint. He preferred, however, to start off at once: and I have never heard of him since."—"Our Chancellor" (English ed.).

and go at two to another, generally a supper, party; that I cannot stand as yet, and perhaps never shall again, but that does not trouble me, for the tediousness of the rout is intenser here than anywhere else, because people have so few connections or interests in common. Johanna goes out more often, and is unwearied in replying to all inquiries after my health, which are like necessary manure on the unfruitful soil of conversation."

The "natural philosopher" and the Italian war.

"In this fashion," wrote Bismarck to his sister, in describing his mode of life at St. Petersburg, "I shall hold out a long time, on the supposition that I succeed in maintaining the observant standpoint of the natural philosopher towards our policy." The policy here referred to was the attitude of Prussia towards the Italian war (of 1859), which filled Bismarck with lively apprehensions lest his Government, after all, should be induced to draw the sword in defence of undeserving Austria. On the day when Napoleon entered Genoa, he had written to his Chief at Berlin:—

"But when they want, at the same time, to avail themselves of the constitution of the Bund to send a Power like Prussia under fire; if we are expected to stake our lives and property for the political wisdom and thirst for action of Governments to whose existence our protection is indispensable; if these States want to give us the directing impulse, and if, as a means to this end, they contemplate federal theories of which the recognition would put an end to all independence of Prussian policy; then, in my judgment, if we do not want to surrender altogether, it will be time to remember that the leaders who expect us to follow them serve other interests than those of Prussia, and that their conception of the cause of Germany, which they are always talking about, is such that it cannot, at the same time, be the cause of Prussia."

The news of the battle of Magenta (4th June) reached him at Moscow,* whither he had gone, in conformity, as he said, with the principle that "change is the soul of life." "I should stay here a few days longer," he wrote to his wife on the 8th of that month, "but rumours are in circulation of a great battle in Italy, which will probably involve a geat deal of diplomatic work, so I shall hasten to get back to my post."

Moscow and Magenta.

Back to St. Petersburg he accordingly hastened, and four days after the battle of Solferino (fought 24th June) he wrote:—

Solferino.

"The Emperor and Gortchakoff come in a few hours, and will doubtless introduce an element of business into the idyll; but thank God, the world looks a little more like peace now in spite of our mobilisation, and I have less cause for anxiety with regard to certain resolutions. I am sorry for the Austrian soldiers. What commanders they must have, to get beaten every time! Once more on the 24th! It is a lesson for the Ministers, who are too obstinate to take it to heart. I should be less frightened of France than of Austria, if we were to go to war."

* "The house in which I am writing is, strangely enough, one of the few which survived 1812: old thick walls, as at Schoenhausen, oriental architecture, Moorish in style, with large rooms. . . . Moscow, from above, looks like a cornfield: green soldiers, green cupolas, and I have no doubt that the eggs on the table were laid by green hens. . . . This town, as a town, is certainly the most beautiful and most original in the world; its surroundings are pleasing, neither pretty nor ugly. But the view from the top of the Kremlin over a whole panorama of houses with green roofs, gardens, churches, towers of unwonted shape and colour, most of them green, red, or blue, generally crowned with a gigantic gold bulb (there are 1,000 of them, at least), is of extraordinary beauty, and, when it is lit up by the slanting rays of the setting sun, cannot easily be matched.

On hearing of the disaster to the Austrian arms at Magenta, Prussia had lost no time in mobilising her army to be ready for all emergencies. Much to the delight of Bismarck, the Prince-Regent had said "Nay" to the request of the Grand Duke Albrecht, who went to Berlin (12th April) to invite the aggressive co-operation of Prussia in dealing with Sardinia; but the course of the war had brought about a marked change of feeling no less at the Court of Berlin than throughout the nation, which now began to dread that France might ultimately turn her victories to account by attempting to seize the left bank of the Rhine, and even to re-establish a Rhenish Confederation devoted to her interests. The policy of Prussia was one of "armed mediation," and may be briefly expressed in the concluding clause of a despatch written by her Foreign Minister (Baron Schleinitz) on the evening of Solferino, of which Bismarck received a copy.

Prussia's policy.

"Supported by a strong display of military force we mean, at the proper moment, to bring the question of peace before the Great Cabinets, and to proceed with our mediation on the principle of seeking to maintain the territorial integrity of Austria in Italy."

At the same time Bismarck and Count Bernstorff were respectively instructed to invite the Cabinets of St. Petersburg and London to concert with Prussia the basis of mediation, which would seek "to reconcile the sovereign rights of Austria with the just wishes of his Italian subjects"—whatever that meant. Russia seemed to lend a willing ear to these proposals, but unfortunately they were less favourably

Bismarck's opinion of it.

received by England, and Bismarck began to fear that Prussia, after all, would be implicated in the war. Thus he wrote to a Prussian diplomatist, a week after Solferino:

"Hitherto I think our policy has been correct, but I look to the future with apprehension. We armed too soon and too heavily, and the weight of the burden which we have laid upon ourselves is dragging us down an inclined plane. We shall fight in the end, just to give the Landwehr something to do, for it would be annoying to send them home again without striking a blow. We shall then not even be Austria's reserve, but on the contrary shall be absolutely sacrificing ourselves for her and shielding her from the brunt of the war. With the first shot on the Rhine, the German war will be the main thing, because it threatens Paris, and Austria gains breathing space; but she is not likely to use her freedom to help us in playing a brilliant part. More probably she will attempt to limit the scope and measure of our success in such a manner as to make it square with the special interests of Austria. And if we fail, the States of the Bund will fall away from us, like shrivelled plums in the wind, and every sovereign, whose residence supplies quarters to the French, will save himself like a true father of his people on the raft of a new Confederation of the Rhine. It may be possible to find a position of agreement for the three neutral Great Powers; our armament, however, has been too costly for us to await the issue of events as patiently as England or Russia, and our mediation will no more create a basis of peace for France and Austria than square the circle. Popular feeling in Vienna is said to be strongly against the Government, and to have so far displayed itself as to make the National Anthem be hissed. With us also the enthusiasm for war seems to be only moderate, and it will be by no means easy to prove to the people that the war with its attendant evils is an unavoidable necessity. The proof is too subtle for the understanding of the Landwehr-man."

Next day (2nd July) "a cabinet-courier awoke him with war and peace:"

"Our policy is more and more following in Austria's wake. When once we have fired a shot on the Rhine, there is an end to the

Italo-Austrian War, and a Franco-Prussian one comes on the scene instead, in which Austria, when we have taken the burden of the war off her shoulders, will stand by us, or not stand by us, only so far as her own interests are involved. In any case, she certainly will never allow us to play the part of very brilliant victors. God's will be done! Everything in this world is, after all, only a question of time; men and nations, folly and wisdom, peace and war, come and go like waves, but the sea remains. There is nothing on the earth but hypocrisy and jugglery, and whether it is fever or grape-shot that tears away this mask of flesh, fall it must, sooner or later; and then there will manifest itself so strong a likeness between Prussian and Austrian, if they are of equal height, as to make it difficult to distinguish between them. The wise man and the fool, too, when their bones are picked clean, look just alike. With reflections like these one soon gets rid of one's specific patriotism, but we should indeed be in desperate case if we depended on it for our salvation."

Hamlet-like reflections.

But the fears which prompted these Hamlet-like reflections were suddenly dispelled by the surprising Peace of Villafranca (11th July). Austria's inveterate jealousy of Prussia had been the salvation of the latter Power. Prussia had put her army in a condition to strike, if necessary; but it would only strike by order of the Prince-Regent, while Austria was for saddling its activity with conditions tantamount to her exercise of supreme command over it. The Prince-Regent was firm, and rather than accord to him the command of the Federal forces—which would naturally have increased the influence of Prussia over the minor States, Francis Joseph hastened to accept the moderate, yet humiliating conditions of Napoleon. Rather than yield to Prussia on a question of form, Austria would cede to France a portion of her own

Villafranca and its meaning.

substance. Rather than risk the loss of her predominance in Germany, she would part with one of her Italian provinces. And yet Francis Joseph made bold to proclaim that he had been left in the lurch by his "natural ally."

Napoleon, on the other hand, declared to his army that its victorious march had been stayed by the threatening attitude of the Prussians. He had vowed that he would free Italy "from the Alps to the Adriatic," but he was quick to discern that he could not even try to keep his word without incurring the danger of having to fight on the Rhine as well as in Venetia; and therefore, like many a better man before him, he acted on the maxim that discretion is the better part of valour. There is, indeed, some reason to believe that, at Villafranca, Napoleon sought to reconcile Francis Joseph to his fate by dropping hints about a future coalition of France and Austria against the Prussia which was equally hateful to them both. In any case the Peace of Villafranca showed Prussia that she had made herself the dupe of her devotion to a jealous rival; but Bismarck consoled himself with the reflection that his country had not fallen into the pit that was prepared for it, and that the war had revealed military weaknesses on the part of Austria which, when the proper time came, would render her expulsion from Germany by Prussia as easy as her partial extrusion from Italy by France.

At this time Bismarck had the reputation of being little other than the accomplice of Napoleon. Indeed,

his official Chief (Baron Schleinitz) is said to have pronounced him "too much of an idealist for the very positive art of politics, and an idealist, moreover, who wanted to drive Prussia *partout* into an alliance with the nephew of the first Napoleon against German blood (Austria)."* The unity movement in Italy had re-awakened the dormant aspirations of the German people in the same direction, and the Government of the Prince-Regent was suspected of not being unwilling to purchase the assent of Napoleon to its schemes of national regeneration at the price of the left Rhine-bank, in the same way as the promise of Nice had induced the Imperial "champion of oppressed nationalities" to espouse the cause of the Italian people. It was even insinuated that Bismarck had transmitted to his Government offers of this kind based on a Franco-Russian agreement, and with reference to this calumny he wrote (June, 1860):

Bismarck the alleged accomplice of Napoleon.

"The Augsburgers and Co. are still very nervous lest I should become Minister, and think they are going to frustrate this by twitting me with my Franco-Russian sympathies. A very high compliment, to be a terror to the enemies of Prussia! For the rest, my political leanings were so thoroughly sifted in the spring, both by Court and Ministry, that it is easy to see what is in them, and how I expect to find protection and strength in the uprising of the national spirit. If I have sold myself to a devil, it is to a Teutonic, and not a French one.† * * .'s factory of lies could attack me

* "*Bismarck in Petersburg, Paris, and Berlin*," p. 85. *Leipzig*, 1885.

† He had once even successfully resisted the temptation to sign a compact with a Teutonic devil. When on the eve of starting for St. Petersburg as Prussian minister there, he was waited upon by an Austrian emissary in the person of a Jew, named Löwenstein. "This Löwenstein,"

with greater effect on other grounds than Bonapartism, if he wants to impress our Court as well as the Augsburgers."

And again, a couple of months later:

"Talking of Bonapartists, it occurs to me that now and then information reaches me that the press is carrying on a systematic campaign of calumny against my person. It is said that I have openly supported Russo-French suggestions for the cession of the Rhineland in return for a settlement in the interior, that I am in fact a second Borries.* I will give 1,000 Friedrichs d'or in hard cash to any one who will prove that any such Russo-French offers were

said the Prince, "was a secret agent, acting simultaneously on behalf of Buol and Manteuffel—spying, executing commissions, and doing other things of that sort. He came to me with a letter of recommendation from Buol. When I asked him what I could do for him, he replied that 'he had come to tell me how I might do a good stroke of business, with a profit of twenty thousand thalers—perhaps more.' I answered, I do not speculate, not having the wherewithal.' 'Oh, you do not require any money; you can manage it another way.' I said I did not understand that: what, then, was I to do? 'Only to exert your influence in St. Petersburg to bring about a good understanding between Russia and Austria.' I made as though I would think it over, but could not quite trust him Löwenstein then referred me to his letter of introduction. I said that was not sufficient, and demanded a written promise; but the Jew was too cunning to give me anything of the sort, and observed that his letter was 'legitimation' enough. Then I turned rusty, and as he was going away told him the plain truth, viz.:—that I should not think of doing what he wanted, but felt greatly inclined to throw him down the stairs, which were steep. So he went off, but not before he had menaced me with Austria's wrath."—"Our Chancellor" (English Ed.).

* Herr von Borries, a Hanoverian statesman (born 1802), who at first sided with the Liberals during the Revolution of 1848, but afterwards ratted to the Aristocrats and made himself notorious as a reactionary minister of King George. He was opposed to the unity movement, and in a sitting of the Second Chamber 1st May, 1850, even went the length of saying that "resistance to the efforts of the National Union must lead to alliances between the German princes, and may even necessitate compacts with non-German States, which would only be too glad of the opportunity to interfere in German affairs"—words which evoked a storm of indignation all over Germany, and made the name of Borries a byeword and a reproach.

ever brought to my knowledge by anybody. Throughout my whole residence in Germany, I have never counselled any other course than that we should rely on our own resources and on the national strength of Germany, which it would be for us to arouse in case of war. These quill-driving simpletons of the German press do not in the slightest degree realise that, in attacking me, they are doing their best to undermine their own efforts. I am told that the origin of these attacks is the Court of Coburg and a literary man who has a personal spite against me."

Napoleon at Baden.

That Napoleon did in reality cast longing eyes towards the left bank of the Rhine, and hoped to acquire it in the same way as he had possessed himself of Nice, was absolutely certain; and his visit to Baden in the summer of 1860 (16th June) resulted, among other things, from the desire to sound the ground in the direction of this rapacious aim. Yet the fact that the Prince-Regent of Prussia met the Emperor not alone, but in company with several of his fellow-Sovereigns, was rightly construed by the nation as a "demonstration for the integrity of German soil;" and Napoleon had no choice but to disavow, in the most unblushing manner, his well-known design to help himself to a slice of the Fatherland.* It was the first defeat, as one

* With the Prince-Regent of Prussia were the Kings of Würtemberg, Bavaria, Saxony, and Hanover; the Grand Dukes of Baden, Saxe-Weimar, and Hesse-Darmstadt; the Dukes of Nassau and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and the Prince of Hohenzollern. The conversation between Napoleon and the Prince-Regent was duly recorded by the latter and forwarded to Prince Albert. "From this it appeared," according to the Prince-Regent's Memorandum (*Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. v., p. 124), "that the Emperor of the French had adopted the only course which the tactics of the Prince-Regent had left open to him, by at once explaining that his object in seeking the interview had been to give an earnest of his pacific

writer * justly remarks, which Napoleon suffered at the hands of the future Kaiser William; and his mortification found vent in his next speech from the throne (4th February, 1861), when, with that indignant air of injured innocence which not even the wolf in the fable could upon occasion better assume, he declared that a great nation like France was not to be provoked by threats.

The Teplitz interview.

Following hard on the meeting between Napoleon and the chief German Sovereigns at Baden came an interview at Teplitz (July, 1860) between the Prince-Regent of Prussia and the

intentions, and to put a stop to the excitement to which a belief in his designs upon a portion of their country had given rise among the Germans. What had happened as to Nice and Savoy, he said, was quite exceptional, and due to the special circumstances of the case. When he first promised his assistance to King Victor Emmanuel, he had told him that this annexation must follow upon any material addition to the Piedmontese territory resulting from the war. The assurance of peaceful intentions was of course accepted by the Prince-Regent as most satisfactory. He quite admitted the state of feeling in Germany to which the Emperor referred, but at the same time he reminded him that the world and himself were now for the first time made aware of the compact with Victor Emmanuel, having had nothing before them up to this time but the Milan manifesto, and the declaration that France desired no increase of territory of any kind. What had occurred since was quite sufficient to justify apprehension on the part of Germany. The Emperor, too, had now appeared in the field as a general and commander-in-chief, a circumstance not calculated to allay the uneasiness of the country.' 'Nothing,' the Emperor rejoined, 'could be further from his thoughts than to dissever any territory from Germany and incorporate it with France. So clamorous, however, was the outcry of the German Press, that something must be done to convince Germany of his sincerity. What should this be? Nothing, was the reply, could be easier. Most of the German sovereigns were in Baden. Let the Emperor tell them what he had told the Prince-Regent, and the news of his desire to leave Germany undisturbed would speedily be known throughout the country."

* "*Bismarck in Petersburg, Paris, and Berlin.*"

Emperor of Austria; and Bismarck was filled with apprehension lest Teplitz should turn out to be another Olmütz.*

"According to the newspapers" (he wrote 22nd August, 1860), "we made no definite promise in Teplitz, and our behaviour towards Austria will depend on her giving us practical demonstration of her good feeling towards us in the domain of German politics. When she has done this, she may count upon our gratitude. I should be perfectly content with that; one hand washes the other, and when once we have seen the soap of Vienna begin to lather, we shall be quite happy to return the compliment. Indirect intelligence, which reaches us from other courts, has an altogether different import. If this is correct, we have made no written compact, but pledged ourselves verbally to stand by Austria under any circumstances, should she be attacked by France on the Italian side; on the other hand, should she find herself compelled to attack, our assent would be necessary, if she expected us still to stand up for her. This version sounds less open to objection than events would prove it to be. If Austria has the certainty that we shall step in to uphold Venice, she will know how to provoke an attack on the part of France, as, indeed, it is already asserted that, ever since Teplitz, she has been behaving boldly and defiantly in Italy. Since Garibaldi's expedition, the policy of Vienna has been to let affairs in Italy get as bad as possible, so that, when Napoleon himself finds it necessary to take precautions against the Italian revolution, they may have a pretext for intervening on all sides, and effecting an approximate return to the *status quo ante*. But this calculation with and on Napoleon may prove very delusive. I think, however, that since Teplitz they have given this up, and hope to attain their object even in opposition to Napoleon. The restless and excited vehemence of Austria's policy endangers peace both ways. . . . . A well-informed, but somewhat Bonapartist correspondent, writes to me from Berlin, 'We were beautifully done for at Teplitz in true Viennese fashion, and sold for nothing, not even a mess of pottage.' God grant that he is not right!"

* See p. 110, *ante*.

A few months after the Teplitz interview, the Rulers of Russia, Austria, and Prussia met at Warsaw (October, 1860) to discuss the European situation, and Bismarck was in the suite of the Czar.* The Prince of Hohenzollern accompanied the Prince-Regent, while Prince Gortchakoff and Count Rechberg were with their respective Sovereigns. The Prussian Minister-President was in favour of his Government pursuing a much more energetic and independent foreign policy, and in Bismarck he discovered the likely instrument of its success. With Bismarck he now held several protracted and confidential interviews, sometimes lasting deep into the night. The field of discussion embraced the whole of the momentous political questions of the day, and a deep and indelible impression was made upon Prince Anthony by the Titanic character of his subordinate in Russia. He was amazed no less at the daring and far-reaching scope of Bismarck's ideas than at the brilliancy with which he defended them, his perfect mastery of all details, and the evidence of careful deliberation that he had given to both sides in every case. Prince Anthony, however, did not immediately realise his wish to have the guidance of Prussia's foreign policy intrusted to this formidable and dauntless statesman. But he none the less

The Warsaw meeting; Bismarck and the Prince of Hohenzollern

* Writing to his sister, 12th October, 1860, Bismarck said:—"To-day, when I was making preparations for my journey, I found in my writing-case the enclosed ink-smear, which I made at Zarskoë, and will not keep from you. Since then I have received a summons to go to Warsaw, and I obey with rather a heavy heart, since I gave an evasive answer to an invitation of the Emperor there. I am strong enough for work, but not for pleasure."

enjoyed the credit of being the first Prussian Minister to appreciate the ability of the future Chancellor.*

William I.

Soon after this the death of Frederick William IV. (2nd January, 1861) raised the Prince-Regent to the throne of Prussia as William I., and the era of Germany's regeneration now dawned. Matters of foreign policy receded for the moment into the background, and the German Question again began to occupy the thoughts of all men—but of none more than the new King of Prussia. Though still nominally retaining his post at St. Petersburg, Bismarck had already acquired such influence over His Majesty that he might now virtually be regarded as his counsellor-in-chief, and it was in this character that he was summoned to Baden-Baden in the summer of 1861.

"In Coblence, and here" (he wrote from Berlin, Oct. 2nd) "I have been as active as possible in the cause of German politics, and, as far as the feeling of the moment is concerned, not without success. I wrote to you from Stolpmünde to your address here about the 19th of last month, and enclosed you the draft of a short paper which I had delivered to the King at Baden. But I have now to work out the subject at greater length . . . so please send me back the enclosure in my letter, that I may go on with it."

This Memorandum by Bismarck on the German Question has not yet seen the light, but there is every reason to believe that its substance was conveyed by the writer in the following letter, dated 18th September, above referred to:—

* See an interesting article by a well-informed writer in *Nord und Süd*, for November, 1884, on "*Fürst Karl Anton von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen*" (died in June, 1885).

"With regard to the Conservative programme, I subscribe to all you say about it. The out-and-out negative wording of its declarations of principle ought to have been avoided from the very first. By merely remaining feebly on the defensive no political party can exist, much less gain ground and adherents. Every party affects to abhor the dirt of a German Republic, and those who are now practically becoming our opponents are also animated with the honest endeavour to have none of it—none of the dirt especially. A form of speech which shoots so far beyond the needs of the moment either means nothing at all, or else conceals what one does not wish to say. . . . Among our best friends we have so many doctrinaires who expect Prussia to protect other (German) sovereigns and countries to the same extent as she is bound to do this for her own subjects. But this theory of the solidarity of the Conservative interests of all (our) States is a dangerous fiction, so long as there does not prevail the most complete and honest reciprocity between the aforesaid countries. Carried out by Prussia alone, it would become mere Quixotism, and only serve to weaken our King and his Government in the execution of their own proper and primary task, entrusted by God to the Crown of Prussia, which is to safeguard Prussia from wrong threatening her at home or abroad. It is coming to this with us, that the Conservative party in Prussia will make a fondling of the altogether unhistorical, Godless, and lawless 'sovereignty-swindle' of those German Princes who use our Confederation as a pedestal from which to play at European Powers. Besides, our Government is Liberal in Prussia, Legitimist abroad; we protect the rights of other Crowns more perseveringly than we do our own, and become so enamoured of the petty sovereignties created by Napoleon, and sanctioned by Metternich, as to be blind to all the dangers that will continue to menace the independence of Prussia and Germany as long as we retain the present absurd Constitution of the Bund, which is nothing but a forcing-house and hot-bed of perilous and revolutionary particularism. I could have wished that, instead of the vague side thrust at the German Republic, it had been openly stated in the programme what we desire to see altered and established in Germany—whether by a legal endeavour to change the Federal Constitution, or by means of terminable associations on the pattern of the Zollverein and the

Bismarck on the German Question.

Coburg Military Convention. It is our twofold duty to testify that the existing Federal arrangement is not our ideal, but that we openly aim at bringing about the necessary reforms in a legal manner, and do not wish to exceed the bounds necessary for the security and welfare of all. A firmer consolidation of the military power of Germany is as essential to us as our daily bread; but we also want a new and plastic system of Customs, as well as a number of (other) common institutions to shield our material interests from the disadvantages accruing to them by reason of the unnatural configuration of the Federal frontiers in the interior of Germany itself. Nor should we leave any doubt that we are willing to promote the achievement of these changes in a serious and honest spirit. Moreover, I cannot see why we should so primly shrink from the idea of the people being represented either in the Diet or in a Customs and Union Parliament. An institution which has now a legitimate place in every German State, and which even we Conservatives in Prussia could now scarcely do without, cannot surely be combated by us as revolutionary. . . . . He might allow the nation to be represented in a very Conservative sense, and yet earn the thanks of the Liberals for it."*

In conformity with these emphatic views of Federal reform he had written in the previous year (February, 1860) to a Prussian diplomatist:—

"Out openly and boldly with our claims—they are too well justified not to win eventual, although perhaps dilatory recognition; and the minor States, sovereign by the grace of the Rhine-Bund Decree

* Compare this with what Bismarck said to a Liberal friend, Herr von Unruh ("*Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*," before quoted), during the Italian War. Talking of the subserviency of the minor States to Austria, he remarked that "there was only one ally for Prussia, if she knew how to win and deal with it, and that was—the German people!" Herr von Unruh expressed surprise to hear such sentiments come from the lips of an anti-democratic man like Bismarck. "Well," rejoined the latter, "I am still the same Junker I was ten years ago, when we became acquainted in the Chamber; but I should have no eyes and no brains in my head, if I did not clearly make out the actual state of our affairs."

and Deed of the Diet, cannot permanently maintain their particularism against the tide of the time. It may, like my own recovery, have from time to time to endure a check or a relapse; but, on the whole, it glides onwards directly we courageously *will*, and are no longer ashamed of our will, but state openly in the Diet and the Press, and above all in our own Chambers, what we want to bring about in Germany, and what the Bund has been for Prussia thus far: a nightmare and a noose about our neck, with the end in hostile hands which are only waiting for an opportunity to tighten it. . . ."

At the coronation of King William.

Bismarck's visit to Prussia on business connected with the solution of the German Question was marked by his attendance at what, to him, was a very high and significant ceremony. "I am really home-sick," he wrote from Berlin (2nd October, 1861), "for my house on the English quay with the tranquilising view on the ice of the Neva. We shall probably have to be in Königsberg by the 13th." What took him to Königsberg (the Westminster of Prussia) was the coronation of William I., which was solemnised with much pomp and circumstance on the 18th October. On that day the decadent doctrine of divine right received fresh assertion from King William, who, like the founder of his royal line, placed the crown upon his own head in token that he held this symbol of sovereignty direct from the King of Kings. It was meet that in Menzel's large historical painting, commemorative of this singular scene, so ardent a champion of kingship by the grace of God as Bismarck should form a conspicuous object. But as the Prince-Regent now became a King, so did his Envoy at the same time bloom out into a new dignity. "It

was in the castle-yard of Königsberg in 1861," said Bismarck once, "that I first became an Excellency."* From the Castle Chapel of Königsberg to the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, from the crowning of the King to the making of the Kaiser, there was to elapse a period of only ten short years—a decade fruitful of more stupendous and significant events than had ever before been crowded into an equal space of brief historic time.

Military reform.

But even before he had been formally invested with the insignia of royalty, King William had already begun to sow the seeds of those events—and very prickly seeds they were, too, in the shape of bayonet-bristling battalions. The mobilisation of the Prussian army during the Italian war had revealed grave defects both in point of organisation and numbers, and by the summer of the following year (1860) the Prince-Regent—every inch of him a soldier—had devised a thorough scheme of military reform. The pursuit of an energetic German policy was all very well; it was the wish of every Prussian patriot; but it was only possible with a vastly increased and more efficient army at the back of the Government. Still, while all were agreed as to the end, there was a most discordant difference of opinion with respect to the means. The

* "I became an Excellency first," he once said, "in the castle-yard at Königsberg in 1861. I was one in Frankfort certainly; not a Prussian, but a Confederation Excellency. The German Princes had decided that every Ambassador from a Confederated Parliament must be an Excellency. However, I did not concern myself much about it, and I have not thought much of these matters since. I was a man of rank without the title."—*Busch.*

Lower Chamber, in which the Progressist or ultra-Liberal party had the predominance, was willing enough to grant extraordinary estimates, once and for all, to cover the King's military reforms; but it would not hear of the new forces being made a permanent and incontrovertible item in the war-budget.

It was this divergence of view which inaugurated that "Conflict" destined to rage with more or less fury for six long years, and expose Prussia no less to the danger of civil war than to the risk of disruption by the foreigner. At first the Crown seemed to have the worst of it. King William began to reap the harvest of that "New (Liberal) Era" which had so promisingly dawned under his rule. The foes that thwarted him were of his own creating. He had a Parliament which was too obstinate to comply with the demands of his Cabinet, and a Cabinet that was too timid to break the will of his Parliament. So in March, 1862, the first stage of the conflict was reached by the dissolution of the one, and the dismissal of the other. The chief of the dismissed Cabinet was Prince Anthony of Hohenzollern, and now again, as in 1860,* he earnestly recommended the King to appoint Herr von Bismarck his successor. His Majesty felt inclined to act on the suggestion, and summoned his Envoy at St. Petersburg to his side. In what frame of mind Bismarck came to Berlin will appear from the following letter to

Wanted a "Parliament-tamer."

The "sickly circus-rider."

* See p. 265, *ante*.

his sister, written a month or two previously (January, 1862) :—

"You write in your last letter of indiscreet opinions which * * has expressed in Berlin. He has no tact and never will have, but I do not think that he has any deliberate enmity towards me. Nor does anything happen here which everybody may not know. If I still wished to make a career, it would doubtless be the very thing for me, if something very much to my discredit were reported : then at least I should return to Frankfort ; or if I were thoroughly lazy and pretentious for eight years, that would aid me. It is too late for me to do that, and so I continue to perform my duty in a homely, jog-trot sort of way. Since my illness, I have suffered so from mental languor, that I have lost all the elasticity I once possessed for a stirring life. Three years ago I might have made a useful minister, but now I only think of myself as a sickly circus rider. I have some years more to stay in the service, if I live long enough. . . . The present redistribution of offices leaves me cold. I have a superstitious fear of expressing a wish on the subject now, and regretting it afterwards in the light of experience. I should feel neither joy nor sorrow in going to London or Paris, or in staying here, as it may please God and his Majesty ; whether the one or the other is done, neither our policy nor I will grow any the fatter for it Johanna is anxious to go to Paris, because she thinks the climate will be better for the children. But sickness, like misfortune, comes everywhere, and we survive it with God's help, or bow to it in obedience to His will ; the locality makes no difference. I am quite willing that * * should have any post ; he possesses the right material for it. I should be ungrateful both towards God and man, if I declared that I did not get on well here, and was anxious for a change. The thought of the Ministry makes me shudder as much as a cold bath. I would rather go to any vacant post, or back to Frankfort—even to Berne, where I should really like to live. But if I am to leave, I should like to hear about it soon. . . . After several interruptions I have read this letter over again, and find that it gives a hypochondriacal impression ; but this is not correct. I feel neither dissatisfied nor tired of life, and after a searching examination can discover no ungratified wish, except that I should like it to be 10 degrees warmer, and to have paid 50 visits, which are a burden to me."

Shortly before leaving St. Petersburg he again wrote (7th March, 1862):—

"I have just received a letter from * *, who thinks that he is to be ordered here, but would prefer to go to Paris; he holds out the prospect of London to me, and I am getting pretty well used to the idea. Letters from Prince * * say that * * is to be recalled, and that I am to succeed him; I do not think that this is likely, and I should decline it, were it offered. Apart from all political disadvantages, I do not feel well enough for so much excitement and work. This reflection, too, causes me some anxiety when Paris is offered me; London is quieter. If climate and the children's health had not to be considered, I should without hesitation prefer to remain here. Berne is another fixed idea of mine; slow places with charming surroundings suit old people; only there is no shooting there, for I don't care about climbing after chamois."

Soon after this he was summoned to Berlin on the dissolution of the Hohenzollern Cabinet, and thus wrote to his wife (17th May):—

"The future is just as uncertain as in St. Petersburg. Berlin stands rather to the front; I take no steps either for or against it, but I shall drain a flagon when I have my credentials for Paris in my pocket. No mention is made just now of London, but things may change once more. To-day I unveil Brandenburg,* then I go to * *, and dine with * *. I have been the whole day in

* This reference finds its explanation in an anecdote told by Hesekiel, which shows how near Bismarck had already been caught for the ministry: "On the 17th May the statue of Count Brandenburg was unveiled on the Leipziger Platz, in the presence of King William. At that time, as it may be said, rumours of a Bismarck ministry were in the air. Bismarck was present. When the cover of the statue had fallen, amidst the strains of the 'Hohenfriedberg March,' Prince Charles, the King's brother, advanced and shook him by the hand, with a 'Good morning, Bismarck!' 'Salute the new Minister-President!' said a member of the former Manteuffel ministry, in a very animated manner, to a representative of the 'New Era.' Acclamations for the King, and a flourish from the trumpeters of the Cuirassiers, responded to the appeal."

conference with the Ministers, and find the gentlemen in no more harmony with one another than their predecessors were."

Minister at Paris.

The King strongly pressed him to accept office there and then, but somehow or other he contrived to get a little further breathing-space before entering into the much-dreaded ministerial harness. Perhaps the most cogent reason, which he himself urged, in favour of a brief respite, was the necessity for his making a personal reconnaissance in Paris before marshalling his forces for the grand advance that he had so long been meditating. Meanwhile, therefore, Prince Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen was made chief of the new Cabinet, which would do its best to impose the royal will on the Landtag with regard to military reform while the real "Parliament-Tamer" was completing his diplomatic training on the banks of the Seine, and gathering information as to the mental disposition of a possible foe in the future. To his wife he wrote (23rd May, 1862):—

"You have by this time seen in the newspapers that I am nominated for Paris; I am very glad of it, but there is still a shadow in the background. I was as good as caught for the Ministry. As soon as I can get away, to-morrow or the day after, I start for Paris. But I cannot yet direct our 'uncertain' baggage to be sent there, as I should not be surprised if in a few months or weeks I were recalled and kept here. I cannot come and see you before I go, as I want first of all to take possession in Paris. They will no doubt find another President for the Ministry as soon as I am out of their sight. Nor am I going to Schoenhausen, all from fear lest they should still lay hold of me again. Yesterday I rode about for five hours as major, and received my nomination for Paris while on horseback. I have the bay mare here, she is my joy and

recreation in the Thiergarten; I am going to take her with me to Paris. . . . . They are all plotting to keep me here, and I shall be very thankful when once I have gained a resting place in the garden by the Seine, and have a hall-porter who for some days will let no one in to me. I do not know yet whether I can send our things on to Paris, as it is quite possible that I should be recalled before they arrive. I am rather attempting flight than taking up my abode in a new place. I have had to put my foot down very firmly to escape at all from the hôtel life here. . . . . In the course of June it will have to be decided whether I am to come back before the end of the summer sitting of the Landtag, or whether I am to stay in Paris longer, and long enough for you to settle there. I will do what I can to arrange that you come to Paris, if only for a short time, and without an establishment, just to have seen it."

To Paris he hastened, and sent home the following account of his first experiences on the Seine (1st June, 1862):—

"To-day I was received by the Emperor, and presented my credentials; he received me with kindness, and looks very well. He has grown somewhat stouter, but is by no means so fat and aged as the caricatures make him out. The Empress is still one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, in spite of St. Petersburg. She looks prettier than ever now.* The whole thing was very official and ceremonious; we were fetched in a court carriage by the master of the ceremonies, and very soon I shall have a private audience. I have a yearning for business, for I don't know what to do with myself. To-day I dined alone, the young men were out; the whole evening it rained, and I was alone in the house. Whom should I visit? In the middle of this huge Paris I am more lonely than you are at Reinfeld, and I sit here like a rat in a deserted house. My

Experiences on the Seine.

* "The Empress," he wrote, a few days later, "has become a little stouter, prettier than ever in consequence, and always very amiable and gay."

only pleasure has been to dismiss my cook on account of overcharges.* You know how forbearing I am on this point, * * was a child to it. In the meantime I feed at a *café*. How long it is going to last, God knows. In from eight to ten days I shall probably receive a telegraphic summons to Berlin, and then it will be all over with song and dance. If my enemies only knew how great a personal favour their victory would confer on me, and how heartily I wish they will win it, * * would then, no doubt, do his best out of mere malice to bring me to Berlin. You cannot have a greater aversion to the Wilhelmstrasse than I have myself, and unless I am convinced that it must be, I shall not go back. But I should consider it cowardice and treachery to leave the King in the lurch on the plea of illness. If it is not to be, then God will let the seekers hunt up another * * who will serve as a saucepan lid. If it is to be, then, forward! as our coachmen used to say. In that case we shall probably spend next summer at Schoenhausen. Hurero! I am now going to my large bed, as broad as it is long, the only living creature in the whole storey, and I do not think any one lives on the ground floor."

And again, a fortnight later (16th June), to his sister:—

"My barometer is still always at 'changeable,' as it has been for some time, and will remain so for a long while, whether I stay here or in Berlin. At any rate, I hope there is rest in the grave. Since my departure I have not heard a single word from any one on the Ministerial Question. . . . . I shall quietly wait till the end of June; and then, if I don't know what is to become of me, I shall urgently request that the matter be settled, so that I can establish myself here. If I see any prospect of staying here till January, I think I shall fetch Johanna in September, although to settle down in one's own house for four months only is always provisional and uncomfortable. In packing and unpacking one breaks

* "My servants," he wrote, "consist of Limberg, a Russian; an Italian Fazzi, who was with Stolberg in Morocco as footman; three Frenchmen (chancellerie-servant, coachman, cook); and a Kur-Hessian with a Belgian wife as porter."

glass and china worth a small fortune. After my wife and children, what I miss most here is my bay mare. I have tried some hired hacks, but I would rather never ride again. The house is well situated, but it is dark, damp, and cold. The sunny side is taken up with staircases and *non valeurs*, every room looks towards the north, and the house smells of damp and sewers. Not a single piece of furniture is set out, and there is not a single corner where one would care to sit. Three-quarters of the house is all locked and covered up like the 'best room,' and could not be made ready for daily use without greatly upsetting all arrangements. The maids sleep on the third storey, the children on the second; the first and principal storey contains, besides the bed-room with its huge bed, one old-fashioned reception room (style 1818) after another, with many staircases and ante-rooms. Existence is only possible on the ground-floor, towards the north, looking on the garden, in which I warm myself when the sun shines, which is at the most only a few hours two or three times a week. . . . . It was in this way likewise that Hatzfeld and Pourtales existed here, but they died in consequence in the flower of their years, and if I stay in the house I shall also die before I want to. I would not care to live in it free of charge, simply on account of the smell."

Visit to London.

Bismarck found the Prussian Embassy in London as little to his mind architecturally as his own desolate mansion in Paris, and "I was quite miserable at the thought of being crammed in there." But "though the Embassy is my horror, . . . I should like to have stayed there a few days longer, there were so many handsome faces and handsome horses to be seen." This compliment to the attractions of Hyde Park is quoted from a letter of Bismarck's to his wife, describing a trip he had made to London during the time of the Exhibition (July, 1862). Though his stay in London only lasted a few days he made the very best of his opportunities, and even turned his attention to

the social condition of the working classes.* Nor did he fail to see and converse with some of the political chiefs of the hour. The Prince-Consort, who always keenly watched the course of German politics, had died in the previous December; and the man who, after him, probably knew most of continental affairs, was Lord Palmerston.

The Premier was anything but an ardent admirer of Prussia, but he listened to the talk of her representative in Paris, and had his own thoughts about it. And so also did England's great "Imperial Minister" to be (then the Chief of the Opposition), to whom Bismarck was introduced by Baron Brunnow at the Russian Embassy. To Mr. Disraeli the Prussian Envoy unbosomed himself in a tale which the great Tory Leader hesitated not to describe as the "mere moonshine of a German baron." † Bismarck's frankly expressed views about

Bismarck, Palmerston, and Disraeli.

* Speaking in the Reichstag on the Socialist Law (1878), he said:—"Similarly, I am by no means yet convinced that the notion of subventioning productive associations by the State is an objectionable one. It has seemed to me—perhaps the impression was conveyed to me by Lassalle's reasonings, or perhaps by my experiences in England, during my stay there in 1862—that a possibility of improving the working man's lot might be found in the establishment of productive associations, such as exist and flourish in England." On another occasion, Bismarck regaled his guests with a reminiscence of his visit to London. "The Chief," writes Dr. Busch, "then told how in 1863 (mistake for 1862?) when garotters infested London, he had often had to pass after twelve o'clock at night from Regent Street to his house in Park Street, through a lonely lane where there was nothing but stables and heaps of horse litter. To his horror he read in the papers that several such attacks had taken place in that very lane."

† This account of Bismarck's meeting with Mr. Disraeli was furnished to us by the late Lord Ampthill, who was present at the dinner party

the regeneration of Germany were regarded by Mr. Disraeli with much the same smiling commiseration as the world had accorded to the writer of "Alroy's" own romancing about the repatriation of the Jews. For the rest, the two statesmen were favourably impressed with each other; and thus between minds so essentially different in structure, but yet so similar in some of their methods, there was laid the foundation of that sympathy which was destined to have a subtle yet decided influence on European affairs, and to find open expression in the singular drama of after years to be known as the Congress of Berlin.*

From June till September, Bismarck's stay in Paris merely resembled the summer sojourn of a swallow; and, like a swallow, he flew about revelling in the beauties of *la belle France*, of that lovely France which his policy was still to strew with havoc and hideous desolation.

A swallow's summer.

given by Baron Brunnow in honour of his previous colleague at Frankfort.

* There can be little doubt that Mr. Disraeli did his Prussian friend the honour of making him one of the characters (Count Ferroll, *quasi à ferro et igni*) in his last novel, "Endymion." There is no one, at least, who could better than Bismarck answer to the following description:— "The Count of Ferroll about this time made a visit to England. He was always a welcome guest there, and had received the greatest distinction which England could bestow upon a foreigner; he had been elected an honorary member of White's. 'You may have troubles here,' he said to Lady Montfort, 'but they will pass; you will have mealy potatoes again and plenty of bank notes, but we shall not get off so cheaply. Everything is quite rotten throughout the Continent. This year is tranquillity to what the next will be. There is not a throne in Europe worth a year's purchase. My worthy master wants me to return home and be minister; I am to fashion for him a new constitution. I will never have anything to do with new constitutions; their inventors are always the first victims.

"I took the opportunity yesterday to dine at St. Germain; a beautiful wood, two versts long, with a terrace over the Seine, and a charming view over woods, mountains, towns, and villages, uninterrupted by green as far as Paris. I have just had a drive in the softest moonlight, through the Bois de Boulogne; thousands of carriages in Corso-file, sheets of water with many-coloured lights, a concert in the open air, and now I am off to bed."

From Bordeaux, "the city of red wine," as he called it, he wrote (27th July):—

"It was only the day before yesterday that I started from Paris, but it seems to me quite a week ago. I have seen some very fine castles; Chambord, of which the enclosed, torn out of a book, gives you a very imperfect idea, in its state of ruin, resembles very closely the fate of its owner. In its spacious halls and splendid dining-rooms, where kings, with their mistresses and huntsmen, once held their court, the playthings of the Duke of Bordeaux are the only furniture. The old woman who showed us round took me for a French Legitimist, and squeezed out a tear when she pointed out to me the toy guns of her master. I paid for the drop at the fixed rate with one franc extra, although I have no call to subsidise the Carlists. The courtyards of the castle lay as still in the sun as deserted churchyards; from the towers there is a widely extended view, but only over silent wood and heath, on every side to the furthest horizon; no town, no village, no farms, either at the castle or in the neighbourhood. From the enclosed specimens of heather, you will hardly realise how purple is the bloom of these favourite flowers of mine; they are the only flowers which bloom in the royal garden, as swallows are almost the only living creatures in the castle. It is too lonely for sparrows. The old castle of Amboise is magnificently situated; from the top of it you can see thirty miles up and down the Loire.

A Legitimist tear.

Instead of making a constitution, he should make a country, and convert his heterogeneous domains into a patriotic dominion.' 'But how is that to be done?' 'There is only one way; by blood and iron.' 'My dear count, you shock me!' 'I shall have to shock you a great deal more before the inevitable is brought about.'"

And two days later :—

"Yesterday I spent the whole day on a charming tour through Medoc, with our consul and a general. We drank Lafitte, Mouton, Pichon, Larose, Latour, Margaux, St. Julien, Branne, Armeillac, and other wines, in the original language of the wine-press. The thermometer registered thirty degrees in the shade, and fifty-five in the sun, but, with a skinful of good wine, one does not feel it at all."

From Bayonne he sent his wife a graphic description of the scenery between that place and Bordeaux; and told her how, at Fuentarabia, the frontier town in Spain, he found that—

"In the Bay of Biscay, O!"

"Every window has a balcony and a curtain, and in every balcony there are black eyes and mantillas, beauty and dirt. . . . . From my window (at St. Sebastian) I look out on to a lake (like that at Salzburg), cut off from the sea by a craggy island, surrounded by steep hills with woods and houses as with a frame, while beneath to the left lie the town and harbour. At ten o'clock I bathed, and after lunch we climbed or crawled through the heat up the hill to the citadel, and sat for a long time on a bench, the sea some hundreds of feet below us, and near us the heavy battery of the fortress with a sentry singing. . . . . I wish I could paint you a picture of the scene, and were we only fifteen years younger, we would come here together. . . . . I am glad to say I have heard no word either from Paris or Berlin. I am very sunburnt, and should have liked better than anything to stay in the water for an hour, which buoys me up like a piece of wood, and is just cool enough to be pleasant. One is dry by the time one gets back to the dressing-place; then I put on my hat, and walk about in my bathing-sheet. Fifty paces off are the ladies—different countries, different habits. There are custom-houses and passport vexations without end, besides incredible turnpike fees, otherwise I should stay here longer instead of going on to Biarritz to bathe, where one is obliged to wear a costume."

From Biarritz he wrote (4th August) :—

"Yesterday evening I went back from St. Sebastian to Bayonne, where I slept the night, and am now sitting here in a corner room, in the Hôtel de l'Europe, with a charming view over the blue sea, which drives its white foam between wonderful cliffs through to the lighthouse. My conscience piques me for seeing so much beautiful scenery without you. If I could only waft you here through the air, I would go back with you to St. Sebastian. Just imagine the Siebengebirge and the Drachenfels placed here by the side of the sea; Ehrenbreitstein close by, and between them an arm of the sea, somewhat broader than the Rhine, forcing its way through and forming a round bay behind the mountains. Here we bathe in transparently clear water, so heavy and so salt, that one can float on its surface without effort, and look towards the sea through the broad gate of the rocks, or towards the land, where the chain of mountains rises ever higher and more blue. The women of the middle and lower classes are strikingly pretty, some of them beautiful. The men are sulky and uncivil, and the comforts of life, to which we are accustomed, are altogether missing."

"Yesterday I drove in the diligence rather uncomfortably packed between two pretty Spanish women, with whom I could not speak a word. However, they understood enough Italian for me to make it clear to them that I was charmed with their appearance."

At Luchon he passed several days of glorious enjoyment among the forests, and rocks, and waterfalls of the Pyrenees, whence—

"On the right flowed the waters to the Ebro, on the left the waters to the Garonne, while glacier and snow-capped mountain stood out against the horizon, the one behind the other, far away to Catalonia and Aragon. . . . . To-day we saw the rocky Lake of Oo, which is like the Obersee at Berchtesgaden, but rendered more animated by a waterfall, that plunges into it. We rowed on it, and sang French *chansonettes* and Mendelssohn alternately, *i.e.*, I listened; then we rode home in pouring rain, and are now dry again, and hungry."

Among the Pyrenees.

From Toulouse (12th September) he wrote: "I have

roamed through mountains and woods in happy forgetfulness of the world, and am a little oppressed to find myself for the first time in a large town again." But this happy forgetfulness of the world and all its cares was now for him at an end, and would never soothe his soul again. The swallow's summer was over. Bismarck's *Wanderjahre* were done. For into this fascinating fairy-land of Mendelssohn and moonlight, snow-clad mountains and thundering waterfalls, dark-eyed Spanish beauties and pellucid-azure seas—there was now flashed an electric spark which suddenly transformed it, as if by the mechanism of a dissolving view, into a prospect of bare and repulsive reality among the unromantic wastes of Brandenburg.

An electric spark and a dissolving view.

While deep in the oblivious valleys of the Pyrenees, Bismarck was overtaken by a telegram from King William summoning him at once to Berlin. The Chamber had again been riding roughshod over His Majesty's schemes of army reform, and his Cabinet had once more proved itself incompetent to bend or break the popular will. Travelling post-haste Bismarck arrived in Berlin on the 19th September, in time to witness part of the seven days' debate which ended, on the 23rd, by the Chamber refusing to vote the military estimates as laid before it by the Crown. To this vote the King answered by immediately appointing Bismarck President of his Ministry.

A parliamentary vote and a ministerial appointment.

The die was cast, the fate of Germany was now

sealed; but, before proceeding to narrate how Bismarck began the work of German unity by breaking the will of the Prussian Parliament, we may here record, for the sake of symmetry, that he returned to Paris towards the end of October for the purpose of presenting to Napoleon his letters of recall. By the Emperor he was received at Saint Cloud, in those very rooms where Charles X. had signed the "July Ordinances" which proved so fatal to his throne; and, aware of the task on which Bismarck was about to enter at Berlin, His Majesty made bold to advise him "not to forget the fate of Polignac."

Farewell to Napoleon! the "fate of Polignac."

"After I became Minister," said Bismarck once, "I had an interview with Napoleon. He then said that things could not go on long as they were doing, that there would be a rising in Berlin, and a revolution in the whole country, and that the King would have everybody voting against him in a *plébiscite*. I told him that the people in our country were not barricade-builders, and that in Prussia revolutions were only made by the kings. If the King could stand the strain on him for three or four years, and I allowed that there was one—the estrangement of the public being very painful and disagreeable to him—he would certainly win his game. Unless he got tired and left me in the lurch, I would not fail him. If we were to appeal to the people, and put it to the vote, he would even now have nine-tenths of them in his favour. The Emperor, at the time, said of me, '*Ce n'est pas un homme sérieux*'—a *mot* of which I did not think myself at liberty to remind him in the weaver's hut at Donchery."*

As for the attitude of France in the event of a war between Prussia and Austria, Napoleon was good enough to promise unconditional neutrality. It is true, he again spoke of "some slight rectification of frontier," mentioning the Saar-

"*Vous vous embourberiez!*"

* "Bismarck in the Franco-German War."

brück coal-fields as a desirable acquisition for France; but Bismarck distinctly told him that Prussia would not part with a single village, saying that, even if he himself were willing (which he was not), the King would never hear of such a thing. The Emperor, who in his ignorance underrated the strength of Prussia, repeatedly warned Bismarck of the danger he was incurring in language similar to that which the latter himself had used to him in 1857 when taken into His Majesty's confidence with respect to certain audacious schemes of conquest and aggrandisement affecting some of his neighbours: "*Sire*," Bismarck had replied then, "*Sire vous vous embourberiez*" (You will get yourself into trouble with such ideas).*

The fervour of a Mahomet.

It was now Napoleon's turn to caution Bismarck in similar language, but seeing him full of hope and courage, despite his evil-boding, he dismissed him with a "Very well, then, do what you cannot help doing."† What he could not help doing, because the necessities of his country imperiously demanded it, was to nullify the Parliament of

* The conversation between Bismarck and Napoleon in 1857, here alluded to, was repeated by the former to a companion (*not* Dr. Busch) at Versailles in the winter of 1870-71, and will be found recorded in Herr von Köppen's Biography of the Chancellor—in which, indeed, it is almost the only point of fresh interest.

† "*Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben, von Arthur Graf Seherr-Thoss*" (in the *Deutsche Rundschau* for June and July, 1881, also published separately)—the writer being a Hungarian politician, who offered his services (which were accepted) to the "Cavour of Germany" as an anti-Austrian agitator among his own Magyar countrymen, and to whom Bismarck related the substance of his parting interview with Napoleon at Saint Cloud.

Prussia, and thrust Austria out of the Germanic body of nations. "Bismarck's whole soul glowed with the passionate resolve to expel Austria from Germany. It was not in his character to hesitate as to means; and neither moral nor material obstacles diverted him from his object. In fact, he entered on the contest unencumbered by scruples of any kind. To raise Prussia to the political status which he thought his country ought to hold, was his religion. He entered the path of action with the fervour of a Mahomet enforcing a novel faith, and, like Mahomet, he succeeded." *

* Sir Alexander Malet.

CHAPTER VI.

THE "CONFLICT-TIME."

1.—*With the Chamber and Denmark.*

"WHO in Heaven's name is Herr von Bismarck, that he should be placed in such a high station?" most people in Prussia began to ask. "*Bismarck—c'est le Coup d'Etat,*" was the ready reply of the Liberal Press, which greeted his advent to power with a storm of abuse, calling him a "swaggering Junker," a "hollow braggart," a "Napoleon-worshipper," and a "town-uprooter."* It had lost sight of him to a great extent for the last

"Who is Herr von Bismarck?"

* It may be as well to quote one or two opinions of the Press on Bismarck at this time. "The Prussian people," wrote the *Cologne Gazette*, "know that Herr von Bismarck merely wishes to bring about foreign complications in order to allay, or at least silence, domestic troubles." And again the *Berliner Allgemeine Zeitung*, organ of the old Liberals: "As a country gentleman of moderate political training, with views and knowledge not superior to that which is the common property of all educated persons, he began his career. The climax of his parliamentary fame he reached in the Diet of 1849 (for revising the Constitution), and in the Union Parliament (at Erfurt) in 1850. His speeches were rude and inconsiderate, nonchalant to an insolent degree, and sometimes even roughly witty; but when did he ever express a political thought? At Frankfort he has acquired some knowledge of diplomatic ceremonial, while at St. Petersburg and Paris he has managed to worm secrets out of intriguing princesses; but with the bitter labour of administrative routine he is unfamiliar, and never has he been able to gain clear insight into the working of the State-machine in all its details."

ten years, but now his words and acts during the revolutionary period were raked up against him, as a previous conviction is hunted out to aggravate a new indictment. King William heeded not at all the great unpopularity of his choice of a Prime and Foreign Minister, knowing that, by the Constitution, the appointment of his Cabinet lay with himself alone, and not with his Parliament. Somehow or other, the King had boundless confidence in the man into whose hands he now committed the helm of affairs. "*Voila mon médecin*," His Majesty, pointing to Bismarck, is said to have replied to a Russian princess who complimented him on the improvement of his looks.

The King's mental indisposition was of a serious nature. Despite his well-known liberality and enlightenment on some points, he was at feud with the majority of his thinking subjects. It was the proud boast of the Prussians that, above all things, they were a military people; but they had been lately asked to indulge in soldiering to an extent for which they professed the most unequivocal aversion. King William was as passionately fond of soldiers as Frederick William, the father of Frederick the Great, had been. Like that kidnapper and driller of giants, too, he did not, perhaps, very well see in what way he would have to use his splendid regiments; but he had a fixed belief that the welfare of Prussia was as dependent on her possession of a colossal army, as the beak and talons of the eagle are necessary

King William's military schemes.

to secure it from other birds of prey. So far, also, his subjects were at one with him; and the only question between them was as to the thickness of the armour they should wear. Olmütz had been a shame and a disgrace to Prussia, but Prussia never would have gone to Olmütz had she not deemed her military force inferior to that of Austria. King William was firmly resolved to change all that; and he had no sooner, on the mental collapse of his brother, assumed the Regency than, with the aid of General von Roon, he set about reorganising his army to suit the necessities of the time. To detail this great work of reform, which converted the Prussian army into the most efficient instrument of warfare known to history, is not within the scope of this sketch. It is enough to say, in general terms, that the number of the infantry regiments was doubled, and the cavalry regiments increased by ten. Believing this change to be only transitory—the Italian war had lately fluttered the nation—the Chamber at first voted funds; but, on finding that the King meant it to be permanent, it stubbornly refused to open its purse.

"Blood and Iron."

The main cause of the quarrel between Crown and country was that they were really at sixes and sevens. They misunderstood each other, and the worst of it was that Bismarck could not talk of his secret schemes without imperilling their success; while the Chamber, uninitiated in the moves of diplomacy, could not be expected to sanction the maintenance of an army for which it saw no apparent use. The deputies were aware of Bismarck's hostility to

Austria; but they argued that Prussia only required to raise high the banner of Liberalism to secure her the sympathy of all the minor States, and the hegemony in Germany. Bismarck thought very differently. "It is not," he said, a few days after his accession to power, "it is not by speechifying and majorities that the great questions of the time will have to be decided—that was the mistake made in 1848 and 1849—but by *blood and iron.*"* This famous phrase, which has been used to characterise the whole policy of the Unifier of Germany, was first used in the Budget Committee. "I brought this olive twig with me from Avignon," he further said, "to offer to the popular party as a token of peace; but I see it is not yet time for that." How, indeed, could it be, when Parliament seemed bent on depriving him of the instrument with which alone he could revenge him-

* "The conflict is looked at by the public and the Press in too tragical a light. The Government does not wish a struggle, and would readily lend a hand in surmounting the crisis if it could do so with honour. In Prussia the great independence of the individual makes it difficult to rule with a Constitution; in France it is otherwise, where there is no individual independence. . . . We are perhaps too highly educated to bear with a Constitution; we are too critical. Public opinion varies; the Press does not represent public opinion; you know what the Press (with us) is. We have too many 'Catiline existences' (among us) that have an interest in social upturnings. Our blood is too hot; we are too fond of wearing armour out of proportion to our small body; but we must at least use it. Germany considers not the Liberalism of Prussia, but her power. Bavaria, Wurtemburg, and Baden, may afford to flirt with Liberalism, but no one would think of asking them, on that account, to assume the *rôle* of Prussia. Prussia must brace herself up for the fitter moment which has already more than once been missed; Prussia's borders are not favourable to the development of a healthy State. Not by speechifying and majorities can the great questions of the time be decided—that was the mistake of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron."

self on Olmütz, and otherwise carry out his great political schemes?

That the army, as re-organised by the King, should remain undiminished by a single man, he was sternly resolved; and no power on earth—not the fierce hatred and opposition of most of his countrymen, not the adverse opinion of Europe, not the threat of impeachment, not the fear of endangering the Crown whereof he was the sworn slave and vassal, not even the prospect of exile or the scaffold—could shake him in his firm-set purpose! "What matter," he said to the liberally-inclined Crown Prince, "what matter if they hang me, provided the rope by which they string me up bind this new Germany more firmly to your throne?"

Conflict between Crown and Chamber.

For four long years the conflict between Crown and Parliament raged. Bismarck's attitude was at first conciliatory, but he soon found that the Chamber, like Shylock, insisted on having its pound of flesh. Nothing would induce it to grant supplies for the re-organised army; and neither the King nor the Upper House, on their side, would sanction any figures which did not include *all* the military estimates. The consequence was that the Government, acting on the assumption that in this case right was on the side of might, ruled without a budget. It was long the fashion to compare "demented Bismarck and his ditto king to Strafford and Charles I., *versus* our Long Parliament;" but the issues between King William and his Diet were very different. "*As* like as Monmouth to Macedon," said Carlyle, "and no liker."

At this distance of time it is difficult to look at the "Conflict" in the light in which it was then the fashion to regard it. Above all things one must beware of always applying the English standard of parliamentary life to the young constitutional States of the Continent. Unfortunate in one respect are the countries that have a written, and therefore unelastic, Constitution; for they are debarred by a *lex scripta* from making constitutional progress, and yet the tendency of all human institutions to develop continually tempts them to depart from the letter of the law. Vain of their new-won rights, the Prussian people were a little too apt to look upon their Charter as a unilateral contract, and too eager to precipitate the operation of that process which, in all monarchical States, must inevitably end by transferring the balance of power from the Crown to the crowd. They were inclined to forget that the Constitution (of 1850), which had conferred upon them certain political privileges, had not to any great extent curtailed the prerogatives of the King. By the Constitution, the power of the Crown and of the two Chambers was expressly declared to be equal; not merely in theory, as in England, but in living reality. Their common and uncoerced assent was as necessary to the passing of the budget as of any other law; and yet the Lower Chamber claimed fiscal rights as complete as those of the House of Commons—as supreme as if the veto right of a Prussian King, like that of an English Sovereign, had already become a mere legal fiction.

Was Bismarck a Strafford?

Now, as Bismarck argued, if the three legislative factors—possessing votes of equal power—could not agree to pass the budget law, what was to be done? By the oversight of those who made it, the Constitution had not provided for such a dilemma, and was the machinery of the State meanwhile to stand still for want of oil? Would the Government not incur a much more fearful responsibility before the country, if, merely because the budget could not be passed, it sat down with folded hands, shut up its custom-houses, and allowed its huge army of officials to starve for want of pay? It had the choice of two evils, and which was the lesser of these there could, in Bismarck's mind, be no possible doubt. All constitutional life was a series of compromises, and as the Lower Chamber would not yield an inch to the Crown and the Upper House—two being here against one—there was nothing for the Government but to act, at its risk and peril, on the law of majorities.

His own view of the Conflict.

Will history pronounce against Bismarck as his political foes then did? It is true that when the end justified the means, when the Prussian army at Düppel and Königgrätz had in the most complete and brilliant manner vindicated its title to existence, Bismarck asked and obtained from Parliament—as at the beginning of the conflict he said he would subsequently have to do—an indemnity for having ruled so long without a regularly voted budget; but he was careful to explain that this was but a mere concession to form. While ruling for four years with-

What will History say?

out a budget, Bismarck never contended that his conduct had any legal basis; he frankly admitted that he was acting unconstitutionally; but he could not possibly, in the circumstances, do anything else; and seeing, as he said, that all constitutional life is a series of compromises, who was to blame for bringing him to such a pass?

His demeanour in the Chamber.

Stormy were the scenes and fierce the excitement which this theory, boldly acted on as it was, produced in the Chamber and throughout the nation; but Bismarck remained as firm and immovable as a "*rocher de bronze.*" He had the conviction of a Luther, and, like a Luther, nothing could daunt or shake him. In the Chamber debates he was contemptuous but never angry, cutting and sarcastic without being coarse; and his social accomplishments gave him a great advantage over his opponents, in whom over-education contrasted strongly with under-breeding. He was as cool under parliamentary fire as the Duke of Wellington ever was under a hail of bullets; and when the doctrinaires and the professors, who were the curse of the Chamber, were thundering against him about tyranny, revolution, impeachment, and all the rest of it, he would calmly sit down before them to write a chatty letter to his wife, or to thank his sister for a present of sausages and black-puddings. But the spirit of opposition in both parties soon degenerated into a habit of aggression, and from quarrelling about the Constitution they began to wrangle about the rules of debate.

With what degree of gall and bitterness the combat-

ants were respectively imbued, may be judged from the unseemly wrangling that took place in Parliament about the authority of the President. No Irish Home Rulers ever showed less respect for the authority of the Speaker than did these Prussian Ministers; and, as usual, their Chief was foremost in the fray. Prussian Ministers, it may be repeated, are rarely ever deputies; at the time we speak of none of them were. They represented the Sovereign, not the popular will, and were *in* Parliament without being *of* it. Not, as in England, adjuncts of the Crown nominated by the people, they were checks on the people appointed by the Crown. As if to mark the gulf that separated them from Parliament, their seats were railed off from the rest of the house,* and they claimed almost the same respect for their bench as the King did for his throne. The Constitution, which sanctioned this state of things, likewise provided that the Ministers "must always be listened to at request;" which plainly meant that, whenever they had any remark to offer, the house was bound to regard them as members for the time being, and to give them a hearing as such. But this interpretation did not satisfy the Ministers themselves. They insisted that the clause in question entirely exempted them from the presidential authority by which the house itself was bound, and enabled them to rebuke

Character of Prussian Ministers.

* Professor Virchow once moved the adjournment of the House because the Minister-President, from an evident aversion to listen to unpleasant truths, had left the hall. At the same moment Bismarck reappeared and calmly remarked that "the speeches of honourable members were perfectly audible in the ministerial ante-room."

and attack its members at will. Only guests, so to say, of the House themselves, they nevertheless claimed to act as its masters.

When once reminded by the President of the irrelevancy of his remarks, Bismarck haughtily replied that he was wholly above the disciplinary power of the chair, and that in all he said or did he acknowledged no master but the King. A violent scene ensued, but it was surpassed some time afterwards by the storm similarly raised by General von Roon. "Thus far, and no farther," exclaimed the Minister of War, in a climax of passion, pointing to the gangway before his bench, "can the authority of the President come." In another instant Bockum-Dolffs, the President, had put on his hat, which, like the extinguisher of a candle, was symbolically used for snuffing out the flame of parliamentary eloquence and suspending the sitting; but lo! either by malice or mistake, the beaver that was brought him proved much too big, and down it dropped over his very nose. The curtain thus fell on one act of the tragi-comedy amid explosions of wrath and roars of laughter. But famous and far-shining in Prussian annals is the story of Bockum-Dolffs and his over-sized hat.*

Bockum-Dolffs and his over-sized hat.

* We cannot better characterise the debates of this period than by quoting the dialogue which led to the climax referred to. It was the 11th May, 1863. Professor von Sybel had said something which wounded the sensibility of General von Roon, and caused the fiery Minister of War to start up and wrathfully fling the accusation of "unwarrantable presumption" in the teeth of the learned Professor. Hereupon the Vice-President, Herr von Bockum-Dolffs, rang his bell violently: "It is my right to speak, and I interrupt the Minister." *Roon*: "I must beg pardon, but I had

The Ministers retired and drew up a declaration to the effect that, until assured of complete immunity from the discipline of the President, they would cease to appear in the Chamber. To this the House of Deputies replied by re-asserting the disciplinary rights of the President, and by denouncing as lawless the conduct of the Cabinet. The latter rejoined by repeating their previous threat, and the King himself added weight to it by telling Parliament that he fully endorsed the action of his councillors. Undismayed the stubborn deputies returned to the attack with an address to the King, in

the ear of the House, and will not part with it. (Clanging of the President's bell.) The Constitution gives me the right to speak, and no bell, no beckoning, and no interruption on earth will ever—" (Bell of the President again, with loud cries of "Order, Order," and great uproar.) *President:* "When I interrupt the Minister, it is his duty to be silent. ("Oho," on the Right, "Bravo," on the Left.) For this purpose I make use of the bell, and if Mr. Minister will not attend to it, I demand that my hat be brought me." *Roon*: "I have no objection to Mr. President sending for his hat, but I must remark——" (loud and continued uproar). "Gentlemen, 350 voices are louder than one!! I demand my constitutional right! According to that I can speak *whenever I like*, and no one is entitled to interrupt me." (Babel of confusion.) *President* (making even more vigorous use of his bell): "I interrupt Mr. War-Minister! When the President speaks, every one must hold his peace, and every one in this House, be it down here among ourselves, or up in the galleries, must obey the President. If anything were done against the rules of this House it would be my business to censure it, but I have not done that (in the present case), as the previous speaker (Professor Sybel) in all he said was quite within his rights. (Cheering on the Left, hissing on the Right.) And now I call upon Mr. War-Minister to speak." *Roon* (angrily): "I must remark that I again protest against the right arrogated by Mr. President in face of the Royal Government. I maintain that the authority of the President, as previously pointed out (by Bismarck), only extends up to the outside of this (ministerial) bench, *and no further!*" (Violent commotion on the Left, and counter-hissing on the Right. Hubbub increases, all the deputies rise, and Bockum-Dolffs covers his head, with the tragi-comical results above described.)

which they respectfully but firmly summed up the manifold sins of his Cabinet, and demanded a change, not only of his Ministers, but also of the system under which they had essayed to rule. This again at once drew from the King a long message to Parliament, in which he expressed his gratitude to his Ministers for helping him to resist its encroaching efforts, and assured it that, "with the assistance of God, he would yet succeed in frustrating all criminal attempts to loosen the bond of loyalty between prince and people." Thus the record was closed, and next day the deputies were sent about their business like so many naughty school-children.

Despotic measures.

And now the voice of protest and criticism, which had been silenced in Parliament, grew loud and ever louder in the Press; but the Press, in its turn, was promptly muzzled—the Constitution enabled the Government to do this in certain circumstances which it deemed to be now existent—the deputies were prosecuted, the bench was brow-beaten, the whole machinery of official coercion was set agoing; and in fact the Government began to go too far—so far that even the Crown Prince publicly protested against its action as dangerous to the throne and his succession to it, and fell into temporary disgrace in consequence. To rule without a budget was what the Government, in the circumstances, could not possibly help doing, whether right or wrong; but the way in which it sought to deal with the arguments of those who opposed this course seemed to deprive it of its actual basis of right.

Bismarck was now the best-hated man in Prussia, as he afterwards—during the "Kulturkampf"—declared he had come to be in Europe. He was vehemently denounced in the Chamber; in the Press he was assailed with bitter malignity. He was compared with Catiline, with Strafford, and with Polignac; by one deputy described as a Don Quixote, by another as a tight-rope dancer, and by a third as a double-faced traitor in league with Napoleon. "Travelling," he wrote to his wife in July, 1863, "agrees with me capitally; but it is very annoying to be stared at like a Japanese at every station. It is all over now with *incognito* and its comforts until the day comes when I, like others before me, shall have disappeared, and some one else has the advantage of being the object of general ill-will."

Bismarck the best-hated man in Prussia.

But meanwhile, side by side with the constitutional struggle—which was only a means to an end—diplomatic events were fast ripening. Bismarck felt the ardently wished-for time to be near when the solution of the German question could no longer be postponed, and his whole foreign policy aimed at putting Prussia on as good a footing as possible with her non-German neighbours, so that, if she had few helping friends, she might at least have no active foes. Prussia was preparing for action, but prior to her taking the field, it was necessary that she should be secured no less against possible foes abroad than against active ill-wishers at home.

His foreign policy.

Now to the latter belonged, among others, the

Elector of Hesse, whose despotic folly threatened to create a revolution in his own dominions which might possibly excite dangerous sympathy in those of his neighbours. In a previous chapter we saw how the humiliation of Olmütz followed hard upon a "revolution in slippers and dressing-gown," which had broken out in Hesse owing to the Elector having suspended the Constitution granted to his people in 1831; and thenceforth this "wee, wee German lairdie" had essayed to rule his enlightened subjects like a Sultan. For a dozen years Cassel continued to be the scene of constitutional brawls which contained the elements of a general German quarrel. Even Austria, who had at first taken the Hessian tyrant under her wing, now came to share the views of Prussia that the existence of a dangerous mine of political discontent in the very centre of the nation could no longer be tolerated; and, on the motion of those two Powers, the Diet enjoined the Elector to return to a constitutional *régime*. Prussia got ready two army corps to enforce this decision; but meanwhile King William wrote to his brother Sovereign at Cassel a kindly letter of advice. The insane potentate, however, refused to see the special envoy, a General, who brought this royal missive, turning him over to two ministerial underlings. As satisfaction for this insult the King of Prussia demanded the immediate dismissal of the Hessian Cabinet. The Elector haughtily refused, and the Prussian Minister was at once withdrawn from Cassel, with the intimation that he would only

Doctoring a Hessian despot.

return when the demands of the Diet had been complied with. After a month's consideration the Elector deemed it wiser to make a show of yielding, and restored the Constitution of 1831. But the despot must return to his measures as the sow to its wallow in the mire, so before six months were gone he had again dismissed his Liberal Ministry and sent the Chamber about its business.

By this time, however, Herr von Bismarck was at the helm of affairs in Prussia, and he resolved that this cat-and-mouse pleasantry of the Hessian monarch should once for all be stopped. He therefore signified to the Elector that, unless he promptly did as he was told, Prussia would take the remedy into her own hands and exact a lasting pledge against the recurrence of the evils complained of. This threat received additional force from the fact that the peremptory note containing it was carried from Berlin to Cassel by no higher diplomatist than a cabinet-courier—the famous "*Feldjäger nach Kurhessen.*" Within three days after receiving it, the terrified Elector had recalled his Ministers and convoked the representative assembly of his realm. Later in our narrative we shall see how his unwisdom and incapacity to rule betrayed his sceptre into worthier hands; but meanwhile the incident just described served to show the Prussian nation what sort of a man had now been called to mould its destinies. It can scarcely fail to excite surprise that the statesman who had violated the Charter of his own country should not have hesitated to bully

The "*Feldjäger nach Kurhessen.*"

a neighbouring Sovereign into constitutional courses; but to Bismarck expediency has always seemed a greater political virtue than consistency. Prussia herself had a Constitution, however disagreeable to him the fact; and it was better, he thought, that the power of German Princes should be uniformly curtailed, than that the survival of one autocrat among them should lead to a local movement which might end in a further diminution of the prerogatives of his crowned companions.

King William's new Foreign Minister had not been many weeks at his post before he had another opportunity of showing the stuff that was in him.

The Polish Insurrection of 1863.

On the 22nd January, 1863, an insurrection broke out in Warsaw. A provisional Government summoned the Polish nation to arms; and the Polish nation began to rally round the standard of our old friend Mieroslawski, whom we caught sight of emerging from a Berlin gaol during the stormy days of March. To detail the causes and nature of this serious uprising against the Russian Government by a large proportion of its subjects, who had doubtless very substantial grievances, is not demanded by the scope of this work. It is not our business to consider, with philosophers like Mr. Herbert Spencer, whether the lapse of time can ever convert a wrong into a right; or to follow the partitioning process by which Poland, from being an independent State, became incorporated with the territory of three grasping neighbours. A rebellion is a rebellion under whatso-

ever circumstances it occurs—whether it breaks out in Ireland, in India, or in Russia; and for a *de facto* Government there is only one thing to do—and that is, with all possible energy to put it down. But the Russian Government, strange to say, while perfectly clear as to its duty, was in doubt as to how, and even whether, it should perform it. The extent and suddenness of the insurrection took the ruling powers at St. Petersburg fairly aback, and, in fact, they began to show signs of having lost their heads.

A word from a calm and vigilant observer at Berlin helped to restore their self-possession. From his long residence in St. Petersburg, Herr von Bismarck was well acquainted generally with Russian affairs. He knew that there was a paralysing difference of opinion among the political doctors on the Neva as to the proper cure of the malady that had broken out upon the Vistula; and meanwhile the flames of rebellion, fanned by sympathetic breezes from the West, threatened to spread and seize upon contiguous Posen. But the part he now played has been strangely misrepresented by most writers. For, in accounts of the Polish drama, it has hitherto been the fashion to describe Prussia as the timid and obsequious tool of a threatening neighbour. The truth, indeed, is that at this time St. Petersburg was very much the docile pupil of Berlin. As soon as ever the Polish rising had assumed dimensions no less dangerous to Prussia than to Russia, Herr von Bismarck himself took the initiative by inquiring of Prince Gortchakoff whether his

Bismark proposes measures for its extinction.

Government would not be inclined to take measures with Prussia for combating the common peril.*

The Russian Chancellor was only too eager to accept the proposal, and in February the two Governments signed a Convention authorising the troops of each nation to cross their respective frontiers, if need be, in pursuit of fugitive rebels. This assumed, of course, that the Poles of Prussia might be tempted to rise and join their Russian brethren, and there was ground enough, it must be admitted, for the fear. The disaffection of the Russian Poles was deep and inveterate; but their western brothers, though living under immensely better rulers, had by no means yet become reconciled to their yoke. Antipathy of race—the strongest of all political passions—difference of speech and of faith, all tended to make them loathe their German masters, and long for an opportunity of renewing the struggle for independent existence which, by the decrees of Providence, had already been decided against them in the survival and supremacy of the fittest.

The February Convention.

Even at this distance of time Poland is still the Ireland of Prussia. Its deputies, both in the Prussian and Imperial Parliament, are the blind and systematic obstructors of the Government; and, under the pretence of fighting for liberty of conscience, its clergy use the "Kulturkampf" as

Poland the "Ireland" of Prussia.

* This fact is vouched for by the well-informed writer of "Berlin and St. Petersburg," the author of "Distinguished Persons in Russian Society."

a means of encouraging the national aspirations of their flocks. Twenty years ago the seeds of insurrection in Prussian Poland were much more numerous and robust; and, as the responsible servant of his King and country, Bismarck deemed it his bounden duty to prevent their budding into open and luxuriant rebellion. Prussia therefore signed the February Convention, and drew a strong military cordon along her eastern frontier so as to prevent the westward march of the Red Spectre, as at a later day she also did to exclude contagion from the Black Pest.

This precautionary policy of Bismarck aroused the deepest indignation in the Chamber, but to him its best justification was the fact that none were more uncompromising in their opposition than the Polish deputies themselves. One of them even went the length of proposing that all the Slavonic subjects of the Prussian Crown should be ceded in favour of an independent Poland. Not less vehement, of course, as hostile critics, were the Progressists, who exhausted all their copious store of argument and abuse on a subject which Bismarck contemptuously called the "sea-serpent of the European Press." By one deputy he was described as a "Don Quixote" and "a tight-rope dancer;" another compared him with Catiline; a third drew a parallel between the mobilisation of part of the Prussian army and the sale and shipment of Hessian troops to America in the previous century; while a fourth avowed that, if the Government got into trouble with any foreign

Opposition to Bismarck's Polish policy in Prussia itself.

Power in consequence of what it had done, Parliament would not grant it a single groschen for the maintenance of its quarrel. As Bismarck himself afterwards said, he had at this time "to face a whole world of wrath and hatred"; yet he remained immovably firm in the conviction, that he would have been a traitor to his country's interests had he acted otherwise.

But the main significance of Bismarck's attitude to the Polish rising was the effect it produced out of Prussia itself. When in that country there was a numerous and influential party which openly denounced the measures taken by their Government against the spread of the insurrection, it was not to be wondered at that Western Europe should warmly espouse the cause of the unhappy Poles. Nowhere was a deeper and more sympathetic interest taken in their fate than in liberty-loving England; and had it transpired then that Prussia had not only signed, but also suggested the February Convention, the contempt and hatred of the British democracy for the Government of that country would have known no bounds. As it was, abuse enough was hurled from London to Berlin. The British Muse sat down to twang her plaintive lyre, Parliament opened up the fountains of its impassioned eloquence, and the philanthropists of Exeter Hall stood forth to spout. But sympathy with the Poles was not confined to the people, and the Government essayed to brace itself up to a policy of intervention on their behalf. In France, too, especially in the Tuileries, the names of humanity

And also in England and France.

and freedom were fervently invoked; and the world was treated to the astounding spectacle of the Imperial housebreaker—who had robbed his own country of its dearest jewel, and bathed its defenders in their blood—affecting to intercede for mercy and liberty to an alien and insurgent race.

It was demonstrably much less the spirit of humanity than the lust of Prussian territory which induced Louis Napoleon to invite the active co-operation of England and Austria in favour of the Poles; but the Premier, Lord Palmerston, otherwise their friend, and the advocate of a "spirited policy of intervention," would in this case have nothing to do with proposals for the virtual commission of a public crime in the sacred name of liberty. Lord John Russell (Foreign Minister) was more enthusiastic, and therefore less wise. It is true, he declined the invitation of France to address with her and Austria a Note of remonstrance to the Prussian Government; but he instructed Sir Andrew Buchanan to inform Herr von Bismarck of the indignation aroused in England by Prussia's "unjustifiable intervention," and to demand a copy of the Convention. To this Herr von Bismarck calmly replied that, in the circumstances, there was no occasion for him to give anything of the kind. The haughty powers of Downing Street had not yet rightly read the character of the new man at the helm of affairs in Prussia.*

Lord John Russell burns his fingers.

* All our statements here are based on official documents, collected and published by Geheimrath Hahn, in his "*Fürst Bismarck*," &c.

England, who had declined the proposals of France with respect to Prussia, now herself took the lead, and invited the Powers who had signed the Treaty of Vienna to make a common effort in St. Petersburg for the good of the Poles, amounting in fact to their almost complete emancipation from Russian rule. To this singularly inconsiderate demand Bismarck again replied that an independent Poland would necessitate an increase in the Prussian army to the extent of 100,000 men; that the concessions proposed by England would never satisfy the Poles, who would be sure to aim at restoring their territorial integrity; and that, after having for so long warned Russia against the national aspirations of the Poles, he could not now consistently advise her to grant them autonomy.

Bismarck pours cold water on English enthusiasm.

Nevertheless England, fortified with the diplomatic support of France and Austria, hastened to press upon Russia a scheme of Polish reform which, if analogously recommended to England by Russia with respect to Ireland, would have aroused a storm of wrathful protest throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire. Thrice was Russia almost threateningly invited to adopt the advice of the Powers, and thrice, certain of her Prussian neighbour, she disdainfully refused. France and Austria at last fell away from England, who made a fourth representation at St. Petersburg, and then the matter was ingloriously dropped. The insurrection was suppressed, but it was not suppressed until after ten thousand of

The Polish Rebellion is quenched in blood.

Poland's bravest sons had been slaughtered, or sent to Siberia, by that "icy-hearted Muscovite," Mouravieff. Nor can it for a moment be doubted that to England and her humanitarian co-operators was largely due the extent of this national disaster. For, after all chance of military success was gone, the courage of the insurgents was sustained by the ill-founded hope of active intervention from the West, which never came. On seeing, at last that nothing but "words, words" was to be expected from the diplomatic champions of liberty, their spirits sank, their resistance collapsed, and the flames of their rebellion were quenched in blood.

Considerations suggested by Bismarck's Polish policy.

The course of the insurrection allowed the odious Convention of February to remain pretty much a dead letter; but still, the obloquy which then attached to its Prussian author has not altogether left him. It is neither our business to arraign nor to excuse. Not long after the February compact had been signed, an English minister declared that Prussia had in no wise thereby infringed her international duties. The rebel Poles had never risen to the rank of belligerents. In appreciating the worth of a statesman, it is much easier to estimate his positive than his negative achievements. To the popular imagination, the valour that wages a victorious war will always seem of more account than the wisdom which averts its horrors. Yet the merit in the latter case is probably greater than in the former. In joining hands with Russia to suppress the Polish rising, Herr von Bismarck was admittedly animated by a desire to

conciliate the good-will of his Northern neighbours—to secure their neutrality, in fact, in the European complication into which he well knew Prussia was about to enter; but he unquestionably also felt bound to prevent certain districts of Prussia from becoming a prey to the rebellion that had broken out in adjacent Poland. And who shall say which was the preponderating motive for the course he took? In any case, he evinced his belief in the principle that the interests of his own country ought to be the prime rule of action for every statesman. But above all things he now proved to astonished Europe that, in treating with Prussia, it had to deal with a very different Power from what the leading German State had been ever since the death of Frederick the Great. Hitherto, the action of Herr von Bismarck had been merely confined to Germany. The Polish incident now enabled him to make his appearance on the European stage; and the public could only say that, whatever the merits of the new actor, his style was one with which they were not at all familiar. Here was a man who, hated, opposed, and suspected in his own country, and with scarcely a friend but his Sovereign, nevertheless had the courage to say contemptuous "Nay" to the proudest nations of Europe, and to go his own wilful way, fearless of consequences.

By signing the February Convention he had conciliated Russia, with whom Prussia had hitherto been "sadly out of tune;" and it was equally his desire to secure the benevolent neutrality of France in the war he knew must shortly come. At Paris he had done

all he could to ingratiate his policy with Napoleon, whose favour, on assuming the reins of power at Berlin, he found further means of courting. A Treaty of Commerce had lately been concluded (March, 1862) between France and Prussia in the name of the Customs Union. At first, Prussia naturally made her adhesion to the contract dependent on the similar assent of her companions in the Zollverein; and the wisdom of the reservation was fully seen when several of the other German States, worked upon by jealous Austria, stood forth to repudiate the bargain which had been made in their general interest by their commercial chief. But by this time the foreign affairs of Prussia were in the hands of a man whose long experience in the Diet told him how to deal with back-stairs opposition of this kind. Bismarck was determined that the Commercial Treaty with France should not thus be crushed in the bud; so Prussia's unwilling partners in the Customs Union were now plainly told that they must either subscribe to the action of their chief, or at once get ready a deed of separation. Only on the basis of the Treaty with France would the Zollverein — which lapsed in 1865—be renewed. One by one the recalcitrant States, skilfully managed by Bismarck, gave in to Prussia. The commercial advantages of the Treaty were great and mutual, but the main thing about it now to be remembered is that, by constituting herself its champion, Prussia did much to conciliate the political good-will of a neighbour whose

Bismarck conciliates France with a favourable Commercial Treaty.

opposition to her schemes she had every reason to avert.*

To Napoleon, Bismarck, when in Paris, had made no secret of his intentions with respect to Austria; and he had not been many weeks at the helm of affairs before, with characteristic energy, he began the task of translating his ideas into acts—a task which was rendered all the more difficult by his being simultaneously engrossed with the labour of breaking the will of Parliament. "The relations of the two Powers," said Bismarck to Count Karolyi, Austrian Ambassador at Berlin, "cannot continue on their present footing. They must change either for the better or the worse. It is the honest desire of the King's Government that they should change for the better, but if the necessary advances are

Bismarck gives a warning to Austria.

* Referring to the relations between France and Germany in the Reichstag (February 21, 1879), Bismarck said:—"I had every reason for keeping up this good understanding, by means of which I succeeded—not only whilst I was Envoy in Paris, but throughout the difficulties of the Polish (1863) crisis, when France was opposed to us—in maintaining such a favourable disposition towards us, that, in the Danish question, France's friendly behaviour cut the ground from under the feet of other Powers which had a fancy not to allow us to fight out our quarrel with Denmark single-handed. Still more, during our heavier struggle with Austria in 1866, France's self-restraint would certainly not have been carried so far as (fortunately for us) it was, had I not bestowed every possible care upon our relations with her, thereby bringing about a 'benevolent' connection with the Emperor Napoleon, who, for his part, liked to have treaties with us better than with others; but who undoubtedly did not foresee that the 1866 war would terminate in our favour. He reckoned upon our being beaten, and upon then according us his protection—benevolently, but not gratuitously. Politically speaking, however, it was lucky for us, in my opinion, that he remained amicably disposed towards us, and particularly towards me, up to the battle of Sadowa."

not made by the Imperial Cabinet, it will be requisite for Prussia to look the other alternative in the face, and to make her preparations accordingly." "Finally," wrote Count Karolyi, a few weeks later, "Bismarck placed before us, in so many words, the alternative of withdrawing from Germany and transferring our centre of gravity to Ofen (Buda-Pesth), or of seeing Prussia in the ranks of our enemies on the occasion of the first European war."

Here was a splendid specimen of that habit of plain-speaking which has ever been the peculiarity and strength of Bismarck. It was the result of Austria's persistent endeavours to ignore the tacit agreement in virtue of which "Austria was secure of Prussia's support in European questions, whilst yielding a free field to Prussia in her German politics." Feigning a zeal for Federal reform, Austria had come forward with the so-called "Delegate Scheme"—a project which, emanating from the brain of the Saxon Minister, Count Beust, was nothing more than a plan to convoke a sort of National Assembly, with deliberative powers only, composed of delegates from the Chambers of the various States. The statesman who was ruling without a budget perceived the futility of this "half-measure," and met it with the startling proposal of a regular German Parliament. But he had also formal reasons for opposing the project, seeing that, contrary to custom, it had been introduced without the previous assent of Prussia; and he intimated that, if the Diet again attempted to overstep its

Austria's "Delegate Scheme" and its fate.

legitimate powers in the matter, he would at once withdraw the Prussian representative in it, and cease to recognise its authority. This was language to which the somnolent assembly in the Thurn-and-Taxis Palace was quite unaccustomed, but it came from Herr von Bismarck, and most of the members still remembered what sort of a man *he* was.

The Diet doubted, and Austria hesitated, but not long. King William and his Minister had of late fallen into extremely bad odour with the majority of men in Prussia, in Germany, in Europe; and now, thought Austria, was the time to bind her rival when she was down. She would, therefore, invite her to a banquet, and smite her into helplessness as she drained the wine-cup. This banquet was represented by the Congress of German Princes which met at Frankfort in the summer of 1863, and made the world smile at the accompanying display of plush and gold-embroidery, of high-sounding titles and low-whispering lackeys, of solemn entries, and grand processioning, and other dramaturgic grandeur. But, lo! when the guests were all met, the King of Prussia tarried and came not. And where was he? Drinking the waters of Gastein, and hearkening unto the words of his trusted Minister, who counselled him on no account to go near Frankfort and all its carnival foolery. The Emperor Francis Joseph himself had repaired to Gastein to invite the King to the Congress, but the King courteously declined the honour. Rightly divining the cause of His Majesty's

A Congress of German Princes without the King of Prussia.

refusal the Emperor sent for Bismarck and endeavoured to win him over to his scheme, but found the Prussian Premier so gently inexorable that he abruptly terminated the audience. Well, if King William could not interrupt his prescribed course of waters and come to Frankfort himself, would he not depute some Prince of his house to appear in his stead? No, that was equally out of the question.

Opened by the Emperor Francis Joseph in person, the Congress of Sovereigns sent to the King of Prussia, by the hands of the King of Saxony, a collective invitation to do what he had already most firmly refused to do; but His Majesty remained obdurate to this second appeal, flattering as it was in one sense though rude in another. Bismarck was nearly beside himself. "I was so nervous and excited," he once said, "when the King of Saxony came, that I could scarcely stand on my legs, and in closing the door of the adjutant's room I tore off the latch." "I cannot leave the King on account of all this Frankfort 'windbaggery'" (*Windbeuteleien*), wrote Bismarck to his wife from Gastein in the beginning of August. And then, a few days after, from Baden:

"Frankfort windbaggery."

"The restlessness of my existence is unbearable; for ten weeks I have been doing clerk's work in an hôtel, and then in Berlin again. This is not the kind of life an honest country squire ought to lead, and I regard every one who attempts to oust me from office as a benefactor. Here in my room, too, the flies buzz and tickle and sting so that I am seriously anxious for a change, which the train from Berlin will bring me in a few minutes in the form of a courier, with fifty despatches that contain nothing."

The Frankfort "windbaggery," referred to by Bismarck, was little other than a repetition of the scheme of Federal reform which he had already rejected, with a gaudy embellishment in the shape of a Princely Directorate at the head of the Diet that would have assured to Austria the preponderance in all national affairs. Now Bismarck was very moderate in his demands. He did not want Prussian influence in the Diet to supplant that of Austria. All he demanded was the perfect equality of these two Powers; so that the interests of Prussia, whose Federal population was greater than that of Austria, should not be at the mercy of the latter State. But, indeed, the conditions of Federal reform were such as even Austria herself knew her rival would never accept; and Bismarck believed that her only object in proposing them was to force on Prussia a pretext for retiring from the Confederation altogether, thus leaving her unchallenged mistress of the German field. At the same time he pointed out the insufficiency of the proposed changes, and horrified the Sovereigns by again suggesting the election of a regular German Parliament, "in which Prussia would have to make no sacrifice which was not for the good of all Germany."

Its Nature.

But the Congress of Princes heeded not the protests and counter-proposals of a Power which had refused to join their deliberations. Wholly under the influence of Austria, it hastened to approve the Federal Reform Act put forward by that State, and sent it to King William with the

Prussia is placed before an implied alternative, and mutters something about a *casus belli*.

implied alternative of acquiescence in the new organisation or exclusion from it. The great *querelle d'Allemand* about the Emperor's beard seemed to be ripening fast. Things, indeed, looked very black. "It wants a humble confidence in God," wrote Bismarck, "not to despair of the future of our country." Bismarck did have this confidence in God, in addition to which he firmly believed in himself and in the big battalions of his royal master. That these battalions would shortly have to take the field, he did not for a moment doubt. Accustomed as the German people were, to hear the false alarm-cry of "wolf" proceeding from Frankfort, they only now shrugged their shoulders on hearing Prussia muttering something, with clenched teeth, about a *casus belli;* but they had not yet become acquainted with the character of the man at the head of her Government. Now, thought that man, there was clearly nothing left for Prussia but to cut with the sword the Gordian knot of the German question. She was becoming the plaything of Austria, and the laughing-stock of her petty neighbours. Austria, it is true, after all her talking, made no serious effort to realise the scheme of reform which had been sanctioned by the Sovereigns; but still she had betrayed her hand. She had boldly shown that nothing would content her but the complete subjection of Prussia to her will; and Bismarck was resolved, not only that Prussia should never commit a second Olmütz, but that she should also be revenged on her first penitential pilgrimage thither. And the sooner the better. The hour which Bismarck

knew must come, and had so long been yearning for, seemed at last on the very point of striking. But suddenly an event occurred which caused the hand of time to stand, if not, indeed, to go back.

Death of the King of Denmark and its consequences.

On the night of the 14th of November, 1863, Frederick VII., King of Denmark, died; and Frankfort at once ceded its prerogative, as the centre of European interest, in favour of Copenhagen. And now, if we were writing an epic poem, we should invoke the heavenly Muse of History to descend and shed a clear directing light on one of the darkest and most intricate episodes that ever perplexed poor human writer. By the death of the King of Denmark the Schleswig-Holstein question again burst upon distracted Europe—that question which Prince Metternich said was "the bone on which the Germans were whetting their teeth," which Lord Palmerston described as a "match that would set Europe on fire," which an irreverent Frenchman vowed would remain even after the heavens and the earth had passed away, and which Bismarck himself declared could furnish matter for a "play representing the intrigues of diplomacy." "When I was made a Prince," said the Chancellor once, "the King insisted upon putting Alsace-Lorraine into my coat of arms. But I would much rather have had Schleswig-Holstein; that is the campaign, politically speaking, of which I am proudest."

Unfortunately, the world has not yet been furnished with all the material necessary to enable it to appreciate

this diplomatic masterpiece. Bismarck, however, has himself informed us that he put his hand to it immediately after the death of the King of Denmark. "We had at that time a Cabinet Council when I made one of the longest speeches of which I have ever been guilty, wherein there was much that must have appeared extraordinary and impossible to my audience, and from the astonished looks of my colleagues they evidently thought I had lunched too freely." Bismarck had a distinct end in view, but he did not very well see how it was to be attained. In fact the "diplomatic masterpiece," to which he now addressed himself, was to resemble the *chef d'œuvre* of those writers of romance who begin a chapter without exactly seeing how it will end, and make some one knock at the door of their hero's room without themselves knowing who is to come in.

Bismarck's "diplomatic masterpiece."

Frederick VII. died, and the burning question arose —who was to reign in his stead? Not over the Danish Kingdom pure and simple, for that was clear enough; but over the two provinces of Schleswig and Holstein which had long been attached to it by a sort of personal or dynastic relationship, in the same way as Luxemburg, a member of the Germanic Confederation, was subject to the throne of Holland, or as Hanover, another member of that Confederation, owed allegiance to the English Crown. The deceased Sovereign, like so many of his predecessors, had been King *of* Denmark and Duke *in* Schleswig-Holstein; and, as Duke of Holstein and Lauenburg, he had

The Schleswig Holstein Question.

been represented in the Germanic Diet. The population of Holstein was wholly German, that of Schleswig mainly so; and the former province, but it only, belonged to Germany by a political sort of union, while personally, so to speak, like Schleswig, appertaining to Denmark.

How this monstrously anomalous relationship had come into existence it is as little the duty of the brief biographer to set forth, as it is the business of the practical moralist to inquire into the origin of evil. Suffice it to say that for a long time the relationship had existed, but not without constant efforts being made to adjust it. The Danes, on one side, had steadily striven to complete their dominion over the Duchies; while the Germans, on the other, had been no less persevering in their efforts to bring them entirely within the fold of the great Fatherland. For many years the Duchies had been exposed to the operation of two opposing tendencies—lust of unnatural conquest on one side, and the principle of nationality on the other; and it began to seem as if the unfortunate provinces would soon have to succumb to the rush of these conflicting currents, in the same way as corn or barley yields to the action of a couple of grindstones. They had been repeatedly overrun by Danish and German armies; they had been deluged with the blood of their own sons; they had been dosed with treaties, and bandaged with protocols, and doctored by conferences. But we need not look further back into the catalogue of their woes than the year 1852, when all

Two opposing tendencies in the Elbe Duchies.

their past struggles and vicissitudes were summed up in the Treaty of London.

By that Treaty—to which England, France, Prussia, Austria, Russia, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, were parties—the succession to the throne of Denmark and the Duchies was, in default of heirs male of Frederick VII., assured to Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, with the express stipulation that the existing rights and mutual obligations of the King of Denmark and the Germanic Confederation, in respect of Holstein and Lauenburg, should not thereby be altered. Now these rights and obligations were, to a great extent, based on an agreement which was the result of long negotiations (in 1851 and 1852) between Denmark on one side, and Prussia and Austria (acting on their own initiative for the Diet) on the other, and which formed the consideration for the accession of the two latter Powers to the Treaty of London. Stated in brief and general terms, the King of Denmark undertook not to incorporate Schleswig with the rest of his monarchy, nor to do anything tending thereunto, while guaranteeing to both the Duchies the continuance of their large measure of traditional autonomy, with the common use and enjoyment of certain local institutions.

The Treaty of London (1852).

In spite, however, of these solemn engagements, the process of "Danification" in the Duchies was carried on in a more determined and masterful way than ever, and the Diet was frequently called upon to remonstrate with the Govern-

Unjust "Danification" of the Duchies.

ment of Copenhagen.* Years passed, and, from merely omitting to fulfil their engagements, the Danes actually proceeded to violate them. Like the Austrians, they had been keenly watching the course of the parliamentary conflict in Prussia; and, like the Austrians with their *Fürstentag* schemes of Federal reform, they saw that now was their opportunity, when Prussia's hands were bound, or seemed to be bound, by her internal troubles and her Polish insurrection difficulties. Now was the time, thought Frederick VII.; and on the 30th March, 1863, he issued his famous Patent dissolving the traditional union between Schleswig and Holstein, and decreeing certain changes in their Constitution which were tantamount to the incorporation of the former province with the rest of his kingdom proper—an end which he had solemnly bound himself not to compass. Trammelled though he was with manifold domestic cares, Bismarck at once protested against this flagrant breach of treaty obligations. The Diet likewise took the matter in hand, and, despite the urgent intervention of England, who was virtually told to mind her own business,† it decreed (October 1) "Federal execution" in Holstein-Lauenburg for the defence of

* See p. 228, *ante*.

† "On October 23rd I had to notify to Earl Russell that the Diet declined the proposal of mediation contained in her Majesty's despatch of September 29, which I had placed in the hands of the President of the Diet on the morning of October 1 (the day on which "execution" was decreed). That offer was declined in courteous terms on the ground that the affairs of Holstein and Lauenburg were essentially affairs of the Union, and that, as they were such, the interference of Foreign Powers could not be permitted."—*Sir A. Malet (Representative of England at the Diet) in his "Overthrow of the Germanic Confederation," p.* 54.

German interests in those oppressed Duchies.* Meanwhile the Danes remained defiant, and on the 13th November their Parliament passed a law incorporating Schleswig with Denmark. On the 15th Frederick VII. died before he could sanction the new Constitution; but, yielding to the clamours of the Copenhagen mob, his successor, Christian IX., signed it before he had been two days on the throne. Such, then, was the state of the Schleswig-Holstein question when the death of Frederick VII. of Denmark, and his succession under the Treaty of London by Christian IX., enabled Bismarck to use that question as a welcome tool for tackling the work of German unity.

King *of* Denmark, and Duke *in* Schleswig-Holstein —that was the title of Christian IX. But this double title, which had been conferred upon him by the new Pragmatic Sanction, did not long remain uncontested. Another Richmond at once appeared in the field in the person of Prince Frederick of Augustenburg, claiming to be legitimate heir to the Duchies, and denouncing the King of Denmark's dominion over them as a "usurpation and unrighteous act of violence." Neither the Germanic Diet as a body, nor the Duchies themselves, nor the various pretenders to their crown, had been consulted by the signatories of the new Pragmatic Sanction, and this

A rival claimant to the Duchies.

* Most accounts of the last phase of the Schleswig-Holstein question convey the impression that execution in the Duchies was only decreed *after* the death of Frederick VII. From the above it will be seen that the stone was actually set rolling *before* the King died.

was the result. The proclamation of Frederick of Augustenburg was received in the Duchies themselves, and throughout all Germany, with a shout of applause; and, by a large majority, the Prussian Chamber at once passed a motion calling upon all German States to assist the Prince-Pretender in enforcing his claims.

Bismarck checks the enthusiasm of his countrymen for the Prince of Augustenburg's cause.

"Wait a minute, gentlemen; not so fast, please," said Bismarck, in substance, in the debate on the motion. "You forget that we (Prussia and Austria) are parties to the Treaty of London, which recognises King Christian IX. as Duke of Schleswig-Holstein. What? Would you have us break a Treaty? Where is your public conscience? It is true that, by endorsing the wrongful act of his predecessor, he has already entitled us to withdraw from that Treaty; but surely it is for us to say when it shall suit our convenience to do so. By disavowing and undoing the acts of Frederick VII., the new King may still claim our adherence to the Treaty of London, and we must have patience a little to see if he does so; but it must surely be clear to you that, if we already quash that agreement, all the Danish obligations towards the Duchies, whereon it is based, will also fall to the ground, and thus we should have no longer any warrant for championing German rights in Schleswig, which is meanwhile, don't you see, the essential matter. The question of succession is quite another thing, and one that can wait; but surely the wrongs of our oppressed compatriots must first be righted. Let us first set their house in order, and then it will be easy to decide who shall rule over them."

We know that, in less than two years, the policy above set forth resulted in the incorporation of the Duchies with Prussia, and in the furnishing of that cause of quarrel which Bismarck had long been studying to fasten on Austria. This was the result. Was it

premeditated? There can be little doubt that it was; and there is little wonder that Bismarck should have always regarded the execution of his Schleswig-Holstein policy as his diplomatic masterpiece. The end was pre-determined; the means had to be improvised to suit circumstances.

"Launcelot Gobbo" and "Samson Agonistes."

"Iniquitous spoliation of Denmark!" resounded all over Europe, especially in England. That there was "iniquity" in the matter somewhere could not be denied, but on whom was it to be fixed? On the Danes, or on Herr von Bismarck, or on the German nation? As for the Danes, we have seen how they kept their word in regard to the Duchies. With respect, again, to the German people, they were calling upon Bismarck to tear up the Treaty of London with the clamorous persistence of the Fiend who stood at the elbow of Launcelot Gobbo and urged him to run away from his master the Jew. But though his conscience would have served him to run, his convenience bade him stay. All Germany was agreed that the Duchies must now, once for all, be withdrawn from the despotic influence of Denmark; and to this extent Bismarck was privately at one with his countrymen. The only point of difference between them was as to the semblance of loyalty in their several modes of procedure, and as to the disposal of the recovered children which, to quote the words of Carlyle, had been so "dreadfully ill-nursed by Niobe Denmark." The nation loudly demanded the provinces for the Prince of Augustenburg, thus asking to add another propping-stone to

the loose and crumbling edifice of the Confederation which Bismarck had sworn in his soul to level with the ground. And could Samson Agonistes unconcernedly view the addition of another pillar to the Dagon-temple which he was about to shake down?

Prussia and Austria had no difficulty in persuading the Diet to carry out its decree (of the 1st October) for federal execution in Holstein. About the middle of December—being a month after the death of the King of Denmark—a combined army, twelve thousand strong, of Saxons and Hanoverians entered that Duchy; and Frederick of Augustenburg, who was proclaimed Sovereign under its ægis, took up his seat in Kiel. "So far, so good, although not altogether well," thought Bismarck; "but Schleswig, after all, is our main object." Would the Diet, therefore, be good enough to request the King of Denmark to annul the unjust Constitution (incorporating Schleswig with his monarchy) which was the first act of his reign; and, in case of refusal, order the seizure of that other Duchy as a pledge for the fulfilment of Denmark's solemn engagements towards the German Powers with respect to it? No, strange to say, the Diet would do nothing of the kind; and it was supported by the Pan-Germanists, who were horrified by the opening of this possible door of escape to Denmark, and by the prospect of her recovering her old sway over the Duchies. The Diet had ratified the agreements between Denmark on one side, and Prussia and Austria on the other, which, as far as concerned the

The Diet decrees execution in Holstein, but declines to interfere in Schleswig.

two latter Powers, formed the basis of the Treaty of London; but now, when called upon to insist upon the performance of those agreements, it drew back. It was burdened with theoretical scruples; its jurisdiction only extended to Holstein; it could not interfere with Schleswig. "Very well then," said Bismarck (who secretly thanked Heaven for once that the Diet was composed of professorial instead of practical men); "very well then; if *you* won't, *we* will, and *must*;" and he forthwith announced that Prussia and Austria would take it upon themselves to enforce the promise which had been primarily made to them.

How Bismarck viewed the question of both Duchies.

That the Diet was perfectly right in decreeing federal execution in injured Holstein, there can be no possible doubt. That Prussia and Austria were not, in the circumstances, every bit as much warranted in sending their troops into equally oppressed Schleswig, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to show. Bismarck regarded the treatment of Schleswig by the Danes in precisely the same light as the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin would have considered the non-fulfilment of the Sultan's promises of autonomy in Eastern Roumelia, and as they did look upon his recalcitrancy with respect to Dulcigno. He maintained that the upholding of German rights, not only in Holstein, but also in Schleswig, was a "national duty of honour" (to quote his own words); just as the British Government had described the engagements of Denmark with respect to these Duchies as a "debt of honour." With indubitable right upon

his side, he committed himself to a course which exposed him to the charge of perpetrating a huge public wrong. It is seldom, one may say at least, that a policy of aggression has been so plausibly vindicated by the principles of justice.

"Grant us twelve million thalers to carry out our policy," said Bismarck to the country. "Nay, by Heaven, not one single groschen will we give you," answered the furious deputies; "and furthermore, in consideration that this policy of yours, among its other ruinous consequences, can only lead to the restoration of the Duchies to Denmark (*sic*), we shall employ all the legal means at our disposal to oppose and thwart it."* "Very well then, gentlemen," resolutely but cheerfully rejoined Bismarck (who smiled in his sleeve at the idea of his returning the Duchies to Denmark), "*Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo;*"† "if you will not give us the money we require in a constitutional way, we must simply take it where we can get it. . . . And let me tell you, gentlemen, and also the foreign countries you speak of, that if we find it necessary to wage war, we shall do so with or without your approval."‡ "Strike up the 'Hohenfriedberg March,' and away with you at once to Schleswig," he exclaimed (in effect) to the Austro-Prussian troops, who were

The Chamber refuses him supplies to carry out his Schleswig-Holstein policy.

* Quoted from a resolution proposed by Schulze-Delitzsch, and carried by 275 against 57, the same majority as refused the credit demanded.

† Speech of 21st January, 1864.

‡ Speech of 17th April, 1863.

waiting for this order like impatient hounds in leash.

Prussia and Austria advancing hand in hand! How had this incredible result been achieved? By what means had the huntsman succeeded in coupling for the chase these quarrelsome and incompatible hounds? But a few weeks ago, and Prussia fiercely muttered something about a *casus belli;* but now she had opened her fraternal arms to her scheming rival. And her implacable rival readily accepted the proffered embrace, little divining that it would prove as the fatal hug of a bear. Bismarck had now completely turned the tables on Prince Schwarzenberg, who had sworn to "abase Prussia, and then abolish her." Unwitting Austria was already outwitted, and it only remained to efface *her*. She had fallen into the pit that was prepared for her. Austria, who had hitherto been the champion and favourite of the minor States, had now parted with the secret of her influence over them. Austria, who had always been the mainstay and *spiritus rector* of the Diet, had now been induced to discard its authority, and, indeed, to sign the deed of its dissolution. From the moment the two great Powers resolved to act together in opposition to the Diet, the Germanic Confederation was to all intents and purposes dead and buried. A great result! But what had induced Austria to contribute to it?

Austria and Prussia advance hand in hand.

In the first place, she was anxious to retrieve the prestige of arms which she had so ingloriously lost in the Italian war; secondly, she could not bear the

thought of Prussia reaping all the honour, and possible profit, of an enterprise in which she herself was clearly entitled to take part; thirdly, she was honestly anxious to extricate herself from the false and perilous position (towards Prussia) in which she had been placed by her *Fürstenstag* scheme of Federal reform; and fourthly, and above all, she was filled with alarm at the progress of democracy in the Duchies. What might not become of all the thrones of Europe, insidiously argued Bismarck, if the operation of this principle of nationality were allowed free course; if the Schleswig-Holsteiners were permitted to erect into a precedent the caprice of a populace in the choice of their ruler? And if any nation had reason to dread and discountenance the principle of nationalities, was it not Austria, with her polyethnic conglomeration of conflicting races? These motives and arguments prevailed, and Bismarck had the satisfaction of seeing Austria express her readiness to share the odium which his occupation of Schleswig evoked in Germany, and, indeed, in Europe. By masterly diplomacy he had managed to enlist the services of a rival Power to aid him in gaining a territorial acquisition which he had predetermined to secure for Prussia, as he had also discovered means of putting Austria in the wrong before the European tribunal in the quarrel which he was contriving to fix upon her.*

Why Austria did so.

On the 1st February, 1864, the Austro-Prussian army of occupation † crossed the Eider, and within a

* Malet's "Overthrow of the Germanic Confederation," p. 14.

† The allied army of occupation, which was at first commanded by old

week it had victoriously engaged the Danes at several places, driven them from the Danewerk, swept them northward as with a broom, and forced the bulk of them to take refuge behind the redoubts of Düppel, their last refuge and bulwark in Schleswig. This was swift and effective work, and what added to its merit was the fact that it was accomplished in spite of difficulties which, to a man of less force of will and keenness of insight than Bismarck, would have proved deterrent or insuperable. With the vast majority of his own countrymen he was as unpopular as Strafford before his impeachment. Not only had they refused him the extraordinary supplies demanded to bear him out in his Schleswig-Holstein policy, but also again rejected the military estimates. The parliamentary conflict was still fiercely raging; the country was still without a budget; and even the King had been charged with disregarding the admonition which once made the great, but unscrupulous, Napoleon pause: "*Votre Majesté va fusiller la loi.*" * And while the Chamber had vowed to do all in its power

War with Denmark; opposition to it in Germany.

Field-marshal Wrangel (Prussian), was composed of an Austrian Corps of 20,000 men under Marshal von Gablenz, and a Prussian Corps of 25,000 under Prince Frederick Charles—in all 45,000 men and ninety guns. These forces advanced in two columns or armies—the Austrians with the Prussian Guards on the left, the rest of the Prussians on the right. On the Danes evacuating their primary line of defence, the Danewerk, the left army advanced into and occupied Jutland, while the Prussians on the right remained to deal with the redoubts of Düppel. After their capture, Prince Frederick Charles was made commander-in-chief of the allied troops, his place as commander of the Prussian corps being taken by Herwarth von Bittenfeld.

* Speech of Professor Gneist, 21st January, 1864.

to "oppose and thwart" Bismarck's policy, it was equally assailed by the Governments of the minor German States. He virtually stood alone, in all the solitariness of misunderstood genius. And to the opposition which hampered him at home, there was added the intervention with which he was threatened from abroad.

English threat of foreign intervention.

Of this threatened intervention the chief deviser was England, and England now played a part which, in the words of one best able to judge,* "lowered our national reputation and left a stigma of egotism on the nation." In spite of the opportunities that had been afforded them in the previous year by the incidents of the Polish rising, Her Majesty's advisers had not yet comprehended the character of the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs, or they never would have addressed to "M. de Bismarck," as they called him (we find Earl Russell even dubbing him "Count," long before he was raised to that rank),† so much mere "waste paper."‡ It was natural enough for the English Government to fear that the dismemberment of the Danish monarchy might lead to an undue and dangerous predominance of Prussia on the Baltic, but it was surely incumbent upon it to inquire into the merits of the quarrel which threatened to end in the realisation of that fear. Unfortunately, there is nothing to show that it performed this duty with the requisite impartiality of mind; and its obliquity of

* Sir A. Malet, "Overthrow of German Confederation," p. 27.

† Idem, p. 88.

‡ Sir. A. Malet was one day told by Baron v. der Pfordten that he "looked on Earl Russell's despatches as so much waste paper," p. 15.

judgment was rendered still more crooked by the contagion of popular feeling.

Inconsistencies of the British character.

It is strange that the most matter-of-fact people in the world should be at times also the most sentimental. When the great war between France and Germany broke out, there were few average Englishmen who did not believe that Germany was in the right, and France in the wrong. And yet when unjust France had been beaten down, and victorious Germany was pressing on to reap the natural and necessary reward of her triumphs, there were few of the same Englishmen who did not cry out to spare poor France, and not be too hard on great, noble, and highly civilised France in the day of her dire affliction and utter prostration in the dust. It was far worse with the Danish war. The dispute which led to it was a much more recondite question than the Spanish candidature of the Prince of Hohenzollern, and few Englishmen ever got to the bottom of it all. It was enough to arouse their sympathies to see a brave little people like the Danes heroically, but hopelessly, struggling against two huge bully Powers like Austria and Prussia; and these sympathies were still further deepened by the fact of the nation having lately received into its midst—to be their future Queen—that "sea-king's daughter from over the sea," whose winning graces were well calculated to excite the pity of all chivalrous hearts for her hard-pressed countrymen and kinsfolk.

Still, the attitude of most Englishmen to the Danish war was much more creditable to their hearts than to

their heads; and had their Government not been similarly affected, it would not have exposed itself to the humiliating reproach of having, by its policy of words without acts, left an enduring stigma of reproach upon the nation. Bismarck was already too well acquainted with the motives of the European Cabinets to pay serious heed to the fire of menace and remonstrance which continued to play upon him from London. No continental statesman had ever, in similar circumstances, dared to defy Britannia as Herr von Bismarck now did. Her "cajolery and menaces" he treated with equal disdain.* Baulked in every one of her repeated efforts to deter the Austro-Prussian allies from crossing the Eider, England at last sought the co-operation of France, Russia, and Sweden, in order to produce "sufficient moral effect" on Prussia, or, failing that, to give "material assistance" to the Danes. But, alas! the affairs of Prussia were now in the hands of a man impervious to the operation of mere "moral effect;" and he had already taken good care to make himself sure of his men, in expectation of such a contingency as the present. Russia, as we have seen, had been laid under a counter-obligation to Prussia by the services of the latter in the matter of the Polish insurrection;† while not only had France been propitiated

Bismarck disdains the "cajolery and menaces" of England.

* Malet, p. 26.

† "I can only say that the Convention (with Russia) has done us no harm in all this Danish question, and that it is doubtful whether, without it, Russia's relations to us in all past and future phases of this question would be so friendly as they actually are."—*Speech in the Chamber*, June 1, 1864.

by a favourable commercial treaty, and indulged with delusive prospects of unmolested conquest—who can tell where?—but her Emperor also was as piqued at England's rejection, as he was flattered by Prussia's acceptance, of his idea of a Congress of Sovereigns for readjusting the affairs of Europe, to which he had issued invitations shortly before the death of the King of Denmark.

The war went on disastrously for the overmatched Danes, and every achievement of the allies was the signal for repeated acts of protest or proposal on the part of England. Now it was mediation, then a protocol, then a conference, and then an armistice; but Bismarck was ever ready with his answer to these devices. At length, when the allies had entered Jutland, the Danes declared themselves ready to negotiate on the basis of the agreements of 1851–52. "Quite impossible," replied Bismarck; "too late now, these no longer exist; war cancels all treaties; the only thing we can agree to is a Conference without definite basis, and without an armistice." But, meanwhile, the necessity for insisting on the latter condition was dispensed with by the crowning victory of the 18th April, when the Prussians captured the bravely-defended redoubts of Düppel, and made themselves complete masters of the situation. Great was the enthusiasm in the land, and loud the cheers for "King William, the Liberator of Schleswig," * as, with his "blood-and-iron"

The capture of Düppel influences Danish (and foreign) diplomacy.

* *"Provinzial Correspondenz."*

Minister at his side, he reviewed the storming-columns in the Sundewitt three days after their bloody victory.*

Quickened in their action by the stimulus of accomplished facts, the representatives of the Powers who had signed the Treaty of London (with Count Beust for the Germanic Diet, which was not a party to it) now again met in Conference in the same capital, to clip into trim and seemly shape with the scissors of diplomacy the cloth which had been slashed from the web of history by the sword of war; but, unfortunately, one of the first things they learned was that the ground, so to speak, had been cut away from beneath their very feet, and that they had no vantage-ground and fulcrum wherewith to move the world.

Bismarck at last repudiates the Treaty of London.

On the 15th May, the moment of expediency for which he had been waiting having now come, Bismarck announced that Prussia no longer deemed herself bound by the Treaty of London. The Fiend had at last prevailed on Launcelot

* The storming of the redoubts of Düppel was one of the most creditable feats of the kind in the annals of modern warfare. The position of the Danes may be described by saying that they took refuge on a narrow peninsula—the Sundewitt—the neck of which was defended by ten formidable redoubts connected by earthworks, and forming a *tout ensemble* not unlike the famous lines of Torres Vedras. These works the Prussians laboriously approached in regular siege form by zig-zag and parallel, and after a terrific cannonade, lasting from daybreak till 10 o'clock on the morning of the 18th April, carried them all with a rush in less than half an hour. The works of Arabi Pasha at Tel-el-Kebir were captured as rapidly by British troops. It is true, the entrenchments at Tel-el-Kebir were not so formidable as those at Düppel, nor are Egyptian troops equal to Danish soldiers; but, on the other hand, the storming of Tel-el-Kebir had not been preceded, as at Düppel, by a destructive and demoralising cannonade, in the course of which 11,500 shots were fired into the Danish lines.

Gobbo to run away from his master the Jew. The hour of justification for this step, he argued, had arrived when the Danes broke the engagements on which the Treaty of London was based; and if he did not denounce it sooner, as he was entitled to do, this was merely out of consideration for the other non-Danish parties to it, and from a desire to give the Danes the usual days of grace. But they had remained stubborn in their injustice, and had appealed to arms, and war annulled all agreements. That he was not bound to consult the other signatory Powers before abandoning the Treaty he held to be proved by the fact that ratifications of it, so far as Prussia was concerned, had only been exchanged between Berlin and Copenhagen. Was this good and sufficient reasoning, or was it not?

The Conference of London.

Is it necessary to detail the proceedings of a Conference which ended in smoke; as how, indeed, could it, in the circumstances, have ended otherwise? Either driven mad by the gods who meant to destroy them, or deluded with hopes of succour from friends who could do nothing but leave them in the lurch, the Danes remained stone-deaf to the moderate proposals of the allies, despite the "barking of all the dogs that could be let loose upon them at the Conference;"* and thus, from "complete independence," Bismarck was forced to raise his demand to "complete separation" of the Duchies. The Danes were obstinately deaf, and Bismarck was inexorably

* Letter of Bismarck to a friend (not named), 16th May, 1864.

determined. The Conference ended where it commenced, and the combatants again flew to arms.

The allies tightened their grasp on Jutland; the Prussians, by another brilliant storming feat, captured the island of Alsen* on which the enemy had sought refuge after their expulsion from Düppel; and now at last, confronted with such dire realities, the scales began to fall from the eyes of the brave but blinded Danes. The Cabinet at Copenhagen was changed, and King Christian imploringly appealed to the "magnanimous goodwill and the lofty sense of justice" of the allied Sovereigns. On the 1st of August the exercise of these noble qualities was evinced in the Preliminaries of Peace, by virtue of which the King of Denmark unconditionally surrendered to the rulers of Prussia and Austria the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and, Lauenburg; and, on the 30th of October following, there was signed on this unaltered basis the Treaty of Vienna.†

And the Treaty of Vienna (October, 1864).

* In the deep darkness of a summer night—29th June—the Prussians in 160 boats crossed the channel—about 800 yards broad—separating the peninsula of the mainland, which the Düppel redoubts guarded, from the island of Alsen, whereon the Danes had again strongly entrenched themselves down to the water's edge; and, under a murderous fire, landed and made themselves masters of the position. It was a feat which recalled the "Island of the Scots," as sung by Aytoun; or the crossing of the Danube by the Russians at Simnitza (in 1877), as described by Forbes.

† See Appendix.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "CONFLICT-TIME."

2.—*With the Chamber and Austria.*

In the diplomatic negotiations connected with the course and issue of the Danish war, Bismarck, of course, took an active part; and in the interval between the capture of Alsen (29th June) and the conclusion of the Treaty of Vienna (30th October), we find him darting about like a meteor from place to place on business and on pleasure. First he goes to Karlsbad with the King, to confer with the Emperor of Austria on the conditions of peace; and then, "with two persons to assist him with their caligraphic services," he shoots across to Vienna, "to be stared at by the people like a new rhinoceros for the zoological garden."*

Business and pleasure.

* Says the authoress of "Prince Bismarck, Friend or Foe?" (authoress of "German Home Life"): "It is fresh within the writer's memory that when, after the Treaty of Gastein" (mistake, surely, for *before* the Treaty of Vienna?), "Prince Bismarck came to Vienna with Counts Beust and Rechberg, the successful diplomatist, putting aside for the moment the cares of State, came sauntering unconcernedly one summer evening across the Volksgarten and round the circular orchestra, where Strauss's band was playing waltzes as only Strauss's band can play them. It was towards the Prussian statesman that all eyes turned; it was of the Berlin diplomatist that all tongues wagged. His very unpopularity had, for the nonce, made him popular. He looked worn and haggard, but his powerful figure

"I am leading a laborious life; five hours a day with these tough Danes, and not at the end of it yet. I have just spent an hour in the Volksgarten, unfortunately, not incognito, as seventeen years ago, but stared at by all the world; this theatrical existence is extremely uncomfortable, when one wants to drink a glass of beer in peace."

Then again, from Gastein, whither he had followed the King a few days later:

"Work gets worse and worse . . . it is a life like Leporello's, 'never peace by day or night, nothing that doth me delight.'"

From Gastein, on the special invitation of Francis Joseph, he next accompanied the King to Vienna and Schönbrunn.

"It is a very strange thing," he wrote to his wife from the latter place, "that I am occupying the very rooms on the ground floor, looking on to the private garden in which we trespassed by moonlight about seventeen years ago. . . To-day I shot fifty-three partridges, fifteen hares, and one rabbit, and yesterday, eight stags and two moufflons. I am quite sore in the hand and cheek with the exertion."

At Vienna, Bismarck was treated with great distinction, and was decorated by Francis Joseph with the order of St. Stephen for his Schleswig-Holstein services, as King William had previously given him his highest order, the Black Eagle. "Ah, if I had but *him!*" once involuntarily exclaimed the Emperor about this time, on hearing some one severely rate the Prussian Premier. From Vienna he again followed the King to Salzburg and Baden, where

"couriers, inkstands, audiences and visits whiz about me without

was unbent, and his hearty laughter, heard across the hum of conversation, proved that the Prussian Minister had not lost all taste of the salt and savour of life in the manifold cares of State."

interruption . . . I do not care to show myself at all on the promenade, for nobody will leave me in peace."

So from Baden he had to fly to Pomerania, and then to his "beloved Biarritz" by way of Paris,

"where I should like very much to live again . . . for after all it is only a convict's life that I lead in Berlin, when I think of the independence I enjoyed abroad."

In Biarritz he spent the greater part of October, revelling in the glories of that sunny and picturesque clime—"wonderfully blessed by God"—but yet occasionally deep in "maps and books;"* and then we find him on

* Says Jules Hansen, a Danish journalist employed to manipulate the European Press in favour of his country during the Schleswig-Holstein trouble, and who at this time had an interview at Biarritz with Bismarck, whom he had followed thither: "The Prussian Minister occupied the ground floor of the famous and now historic *maison rouge* situated on the shore of the Bay of Biscay, at the foot of the hill on which stood the villa of the Emperor. On my entering his *cabinet de travail* I found him chatting with Prince Orloff, then Russian Minister at Brussels, who soon withdrew and left me alone with M. de Bismarck. King William's Prime Minister was standing before a large table covered with maps and books, and he took up and began to play with a long Catalonian knife—a weapon, it may be remarked, which every visitor to Biarritz buys (as a souvenir) from the Spanish pedlars who hawk the country. This was the first time I had seen M. de Bismarck; but he did not then make upon me the deep impression which he afterwards did. He even seemed to show some embarrassment in opening the conversation. But at last, after reading my letter of introduction, he began by abusing the Vicomte de Guéronnière, from whom I had brought it. 'I cannot,' he said 'admit the right of this '*Monsieur*' to introduce to me any one he likes. In the *France* he has told terrific lies about me, especially with regard to Polish affairs. But I receive you merely because you are a Dane, and although the Vicomte' (with a Frenchman's accuracy) 'calls you *Hansen* instead of *Hansen*. Your name is not unfamiliar to me. I know quite well that you have been very hard on us Prussians in the French Press.'—'That is indeed quite true,' I replied; 'I have done all I could to make your position in France as uncomfortable as possible.' 'Well,' he rejoined, 'that is only to your credit. But what is the object of your visit?'"—"*Les Coulisses de la Diplomatie*," *par Jules Hansen* (*Paris*, 1880).

his way back to Berlin at Paris again, where he had "much politics, an audience (of the Emperor) at St. Cloud, and dinner at Drouyn de Lhuys (Foreign Minister)." That the fate of the Duchies was seriously discussed at St. Cloud there can be no doubt; and Bismarck returned to Berlin at the same time (30th October) as the Treaty of Vienna was signed.

By the chief clause in that Treaty the King of Denmark, as before said, surrendered Schleswig-Holstein and Lauenburg to the Sovereigns of Prussia and Austria, and bound himself to submit to the way in which their Majesties might think fit to dispose of these three Duchies. As far as Denmark, therefore, was concerned, the Schleswig-Holstein question was past and done with. But for the allies there yet remained the terribly difficult and dangerous problem—what to do with these Duchies, now that at last they had been wrested from their unjust step-mother of a "Niobe Denmark"? Fasolt and Fafner, the two giants in the prologue to Wagner's great operatic trilogy, were friendly enough when building a sky-palace, or Walhalla, for the King of the Gods; but when it came to the apportionment of the reward which Wuotan had promised them, they fell out, did these all too-grasping brothers; and Fafner, slaying Fasolt, made off with the whole of their pay in the shape of the Nibelungen-Hoard. And was it thus to be with the fraternal conquerors of "Schleswig-Holstein sea-surrounded"? A few weeks after returning to Berlin, Bismarck observed to a friend that a war

Fasolt and Fafner, the Giant Brothers.

between Prussia and Austria "might break out in a month or two, perhaps in a year; who could tell?"* Had, then, the two Giant Brothers so soon commenced to quarrel about the division of the spoil? What were their respective aims and claims with regard to it? Nine tailors are said to make one man, but how was one Duke to be made out of two Sovereigns—an Emperor and a King?

While the London Conference was sitting, Bismarck had declared to a friend that "annexation (of the Duchies) is *not* our foremost aim, though it certainly would be the pleasantest result."† But that result had been rendered all the more inevitable, first by the obstinacy of the Danes, and then by the unwisdom of the Prince of Augustenburg; and a variety of circumstances were gradually tending to make Bismarck exclaim (within himself), "*Beati possidentes!*"—"Blessed are they that are in possession, for they shall not be cast out!" Real and actual possession like that of the Austro-Prussian—especially the Prussian—forces, and not the mere appearance of a territorial grip like that of the Saxons and Hanoverians in Holstein. "Will you be kind enough to return home now, gentlemen," said Bismarck to the Saxo-Hanoverian commanders; "you have done your duty bravely and well; you were sent into Holstein and Lauenburg to do 'execution' for the Diet; but now,

"Beati possidentes."

* "Les Coulisses de la Diplomatie," p. 41.

† Letter to an unnamed correspondent, 16th May, 1864, already quoted.

you know, all the three Duchies have been ceded to the allies who were not the mandatories of the Diet, and so are not bound to render it an account of their stewardship. Your occupation, like Othello's, is therefore gone, and I must ask you to withdraw at once—gracefully, if you can; grudgingly, if you like."

Saxony and Hanover get notice to quit Holstein.

Though somewhat startled by this peremptory summons, Hanover wisely chose the former manner of retirement; but Saxony, whose policy was guided by Count Beust—a statesman who had already begun his long and impotent career of envious and intriguing opposition to the ideas of his Prussian colleague and countryman*—grumbled, remonstrated, refused, and even called in her reserves, and made many other ostentatious war-preparations. But that availed nothing. "Go you must, and shall," firmly repeated Bismarck; "even the Diet, who sent you there, has pronounced against your remaining." So out, accordingly, but with a villainous bad grace, they had to let themselves be pushed by the allies, who now provisionally placed the administration of all the three Duchies in the hands of a Civil Commission, pending the settlement of their ultimate proprietorship.

Disagreement of the Giant Brothers.

But, alas! the two commissioners-in-chief had been furnished with diametrically opposite instructions; and whatever the Prussian—Baron Zedlitz—set about to do, was sure to be thwarted by his Austrian colleague, Baron Halbhuber.

* The Beust and the Bismarck families were neighbours in the Old Mark.

The latter had received orders to support the pretensions of the Duke of Augustenburg; the former to frown upon them. The Austrians encouraged demonstrations in favour of the Pretender; and the Prussians retorted by arresting and expelling the agitators. The Austrians ostentatiously held aloof from the celebration of the anniversary of Düppel, but, on the other hand, drank toasts and made speeches on the birthday of the Duke of Augustenburg. The Prussian naval station on the Baltic was, by royal command, transferred from Dantzig to Kiel, and the Imperial Government sent round to the latter harbour a couple of war-vessels by way of asserting its condominate rights. Prussia proposed the expulsion of the Pretender, the cause of so much mischief, and Austria not only answered with an emphatic "No!" but asked that his claims should be recognised.

In making this demand, Austria was but acting for the population of the Duchies themselves, of which by far the greater portion desired to have the Prince of Augustenburg for their ruler. It is true that a small fraction of landed proprietors had prayed for annexation to Prussia; but, had the question been put to a *plébiscite*, there can be no doubt what the popular vote would have been. Even the King of Prussia himself was at first strongly in favour of the Pretender. "*Il croit*," said Bismarck, "*qu'un autre a droit aux duchés, et*" (much as I should wish to do otherwise), "*je ne puis pas être plus royaliste que le Roi.*"* But circumstances tended to modify the

Bismarck and the Prince of Augustenburg.

* "Coulisses de la Diplomatie," p. 35.

King's belief. As for Bismarck himself, he adopted the convenient views of the crown-jurists that the Danish law of succession (of 1853), founded on the Treaty of London (in 1852), fully entitled King Christian to the sovereignty of the Duchies, which he had now formally surrendered to the allies; while the father of the Pretender had, in 1852, for a money consideration, formally waived all his rights of reversion to the conquered territory.* At the same time, in consideration of the clearly expressed wish of the Schleswig-Holsteiners themselves, and for other prudent reasons, Bismarck was not unwilling to see the Prince-Pretender invested with the ducal sovereignty, but only under conditions which would equitably repay Prussia for the blood she had spilt in winning it for him, and which would guarantee to her and to Germany the existence of a strong bulwark of defence, instead of a weak and capricious principality on her northern frontier.

While yet the war was in progress, the Prince-Pretender had come to Berlin to urge his suit at Court, and had also been received by Bismarck; but on the latter—with whom the personal element in every question went for much, if not for everything—his demeanour made a very bad impression. It could not but prepossess Bismarck against Prince Frederick that he had previously invoked the aid of a foreign potentate, of Napoleon; and now, instead of professing gratitude for the work of liberation done by Prussia, he haughtily described her services as gratuitous and uncalled for by

* See p. 224, *ante*.

the Duchies, whose interests would have been much better championed by the Diet. The interview between King William's Prime Minister and the Pretender, which took place in the billiard-room of the former, and lasted far into the night, was dramatic enough.

"At first," said Bismarck once, "I wanted from him no more than what the minor Princes conceded in 1866. But he would not yield an inch (thank Heaven, thought I to myself, and thanks to the wisdom of his legal advisers). . . . At first I called him 'Highness,' and was altogether very polite. But when he began to make objections about Kiel Harbour, which we wanted, and would listen to none of our military demands, I put on a different face. I now titled him 'Translucency,' and told him at last quite coolly that we could easily wring the neck of the chicken we ourselves had hatched."*

No other course appearing practicable, Bismarck sounded Austria as to the annexation of the Duchies to Prussia, and was informed that the Emperor could only consent to this on his receiving some territorial equivalent, such, for example, as the county of Glatz in Silesia. "What?" thought Bismarck angrily, "Give you back part of what was won for Prussia by the patriotic sword of Frederick the Great? You must be dreaming!" "Well, these are our conditions at any rate, and if you don't agree to them, we beg you to honour the claims of the Prince of Augustenburg." Bismarck rejoined that Prussia could only do so on conditions† which would have made the new Duke of Schleswig-Holstein little other than a mediatised Prince, a mere feudatory of the Prussian

The Giant Brothers try to, but cannot agree.

* "Bismarck in the Franco-German War." † *Vide* Malet, p. 98.

Crown. Was Prussia, then, entitled to reap *no* benefit from the blood she had spilt? "No, at least not to the extent demanded," replied Austria, who now again egged on the minor States to petition the Diet in favour of the Pretender. And the Diet, too, which had not ratified the Treaty of London, and consequently ignored the alienation rights of the King of Denmark with respect to the Duchies based upon it, *did* pass a vote in favour of the Pretender.* But was it likely that Prussia, who had sent her troops into the Duchies in defiance of the Diet, should now comply with its wish as to their disposal? Her real answer to its decision was a demand for the expulsion of the Pretender, to which Austria paid no heed; and a proposal to convoke and consult the estates of the Duchies as to their future fate—which fell to the ground for want of mutual agreement as to the method of election. The relations of the Giant Brothers in the Duchies were beginning to be most dangerously strained. More than once already they had all but clutched at their swords. "It looks very shaky with peace," wrote Bismarck from Gastein, in August, 1865, whither he had gone with the King to "patch up the rents in the building." Had it not been for the King, who was equally cautious and conservative, his Minister would have already sought means to tear down the whole crumbling edifice.

* "In giving his vote against the proposition, his Excellency (the Prussian Member, M. de Savigny) said he had the orders of his Government to state that, considering the claims of the hereditary Prince of Augustenburg as proven, Prussia protested against the pretensions of the Diet to make a binding decision on questions still in dispute."—Malet, p. 103.

At Karlsbad, whither Bismarck had first accompanied the King (in June), he told the Duc de Gramont (that "brazen-faced dunderhead," as he afterwards called him) that he considered "war between the allies not only to be inevitable but necessary," and that it was Prussia's mission to take the destinies of Germany into her own hands. From Karlsbad the King proceeded to Ratisbon, where was held a full Cabinet Council attended by the Prussian Ambassadors at Paris and Vienna; and two days afterwards, at Salzburg, Bismarck told the Bavarian minister, Von der Pfordten, that a deadly duel between the allies was impending, and that it behoved the minor States to be wise in time and take the proper side. "One single encounter," he prophetically said, "one decisive battle, and Prussia will have it in her power to dictate conditions." From Salzburg he again proceeded with the King to Gastein to exert himself (unwillingly, we may suppose) with an Austrian plenipotentiary in "patching up the rents in the building (of peace)," which he well knew was doomed to come tumbling down. But the negotiations at first threatened to be futile, and ultimatums were already thought of.

A last desperate effort to keep the peace.

Once more, however, the chariot of war was arrested in its onward career just as it was beginning to move, and the drag that was hung upon its wheels this time was the Convention of Gastein (14th August). It will sufficiently convey the contents of this Treaty—which was declared to be pro-

The Convention of Gastein (August, 1865).

visional in its nature—to say that it virtually centred the sovereignty of Schleswig in Prussia, and of Holstein in Austria; while, in consideration of the payment of two and a half millions of Danish dollars, the Emperor Francis Joseph ceded to King William all his rights of co-proprietorship in the Duchy of Lauenburg.* A few days after the signature of this Treaty, the sovereign parties to it, accompanied by their respective Premiers, met and embraced at Ischl; and within a month King William took formal possession of Lauenburg, appointing as its Minister Herr von Bismarck, whose brilliant services he now rewarded (16th September) with the title of Count—a title which, while it flattered his family pride, tended to arouse his superstitious fears.† Seated on a throne in the church of Ratzeburg, with the Crown Prince on his right and Count Bismarck on his left, King William ceremoniously received the oath of allegiance from his new subjects, who honestly declared themselves to be satisfied with their new political lot.

King William may have looked upon the Convention

* "'I remember,' said the Chief, in the course of further conversation, 'once sitting with Manteuffel and——' (name unintelligible) 'on the stone before the church at Beckstein. The King came past, and I proposed to greet him as the three witches did: "Hail, Thane of Lauenburg! All hail, Thane of Kiel! All hail, Thane of Schleswig!" It was at the time I concluded the Treaty of Gastein with Blome.'"—Busch.

† "The Minister then remarked, though I forget what occasioned him to do so, that all the families in Pomerania which rose to the rank of Count died out. 'The country cannot tolerate the name,' he added. 'I know ten or twelve families with whom it has been so.' He mentioned some, and went on to say: 'So I struggled hard against it at first. At last I had to submit, but I am not without my apprehensions even now.'"—*Idem.*

of Gastein as a happy remedy against rupture with a Sovereign with whom, in spite of all provocation, he was most unwilling to break. Bismarck certainly regarded it as another strong mesh in the toils with which he was seeking to encompass and destroy the implacable rival of his country. Military exigencies demanded some delay, and he had not yet secured himself either of France or of Italy. To all Europe the Treaty of Gastein was a mystery; to some Powers, such as France and England, it was an outrage and a scandal. The Government of Napoleon denounced it to its agents abroad as an act of political "highway robbery and attorneyism" (to express its meaning in the words of Carlyle); while Lord John Russell, with equal vigour, described it as the expression of mere brute force. To emphasise, moreover, the agreement of these two Powers in the matter, their fleets met and made a futile demonstration at Cherbourg. And yet not altogether futile, for it determined Bismarck to make a personal effort to conciliate Napoleon. The King, it is true, mindful of the dignity of his crown, would not hear of his Prime Minister going to France until the Cabinet of the Tuileries, on the assurance of Prussia that the Convention was of a strictly provisional nature, consented to tone down the terms of its Circular Note; but after that he started off in search of the Emperor, and found him at Biarritz (20th October).

What Europe thought of it.

Much talked of then (and not yet wholly divested of the mystery which surrounded it) was the famous interview between Bismarck and Napoleon at Biarritz.

"Is he mad?" whispered the Emperor to Prosper Merimée, on whose arm he leaned as he walked along the beach with what one of his hagiologists describes as the "boisterous German." *

Bismarck and Napoleon at Biarritz.

"*Il n'y a que M. de Bismarck qui soit un vrai grand homme*," wrote Merimée at this time to his *Inconnue*.† "He has quite won me; as, indeed, he also captivated Napoleon himself by his frankness and the charm of his manners." ‡ But to what exact extent this captivation went in a political sense, does not clearly appear. According to one writer,§ Napoleon "did not make any promises as to the future policy of France towards Prussia;" while another authority || (who ought to have known better, but probably did not) has it that "Bismarck returned to Berlin with such assurance of sympathy and benevolent neutrality on the part of France," that he could make arrangements for safely stripping the Rhenish frontier of part of its garrison. Napoleon's weak point was Italy. He had all the enthusiasm of a dreamer, and a meddler in the affairs of others, for the liberation of Venetia from the Austrian yoke; and on this chord, which he had previously tuned at Florence, Bismarck skilfully and persistently harped. Perhaps, even, he wickedly tempted Napoleon with possibilities of compensating conquest in the direction of Belgium, and thus con-

* Blanchard Jerrold.
† "Lettres à une Inconnue," vol. ii., p. 321.
‡ "Coulisses de la Diplomatie," p. 54.
§ *Ibid.*
|| Sir A. Malet.

verted the strictures of the moralist into the hopes of the robber. But be that as it may, and notwithstanding that Austria was assiduously suing for the friendship of France, there can be little doubt that Bismarck returned home with fresh confidence in the feasibility of his plans; and the fact that Frenchmen now began to refer to him as "*l'homme de Biarritz*" seemed to imply a regretful belief on their part that, with the tongue of a Ulysses and the master-mind of a Richelieu, he had somehow managed to make their own astute Emperor a passive instrument in the execution of his far-reaching schemes.

But while the stream of Bismarck's foreign policy was thus flowing steadily, if secretly, in the desired direction, the torrent of domestic conflict threatened to burst its banks and spread ruin around. Unpersuaded even by the eloquence of the cannon which had thundered at Düppel, commanding the submission of the Danes and the respect of Europe, the Liberals in Parliament still stubbornly clung to their tactics of clamorous and "impotent negation."* Such inflexible and ferocious adhesion to abstract dogmas of policy might well have been expected of a Papal Council, but seemed inexplicable in a body of men claiming to represent their country, and to have its interests only at heart. But, in truth, the most prominent members of that body were men who—however rich in private virtues, including even that of patriotism—were the curse of the Assembly in which

Continued conflict with the Chamber; character of its leading members.

* Speech of Bismarck.

they sat; men who, to the pedantry of the scholiast almost mad with too much learning, added claims to infallibility more unyielding than those ever advanced by the most presumptuous occupant of St. Peter's Chair. To take only one or two examples of the class we mean. Professor von Sybel justly passed among his students for an eloquent and trustworthy expounder of the French Revolution; and no one denied that Professor Gneist was a perfect mine—deep, though dark and dismal—of erudition in constitutional law; while every one admitted that Dr. Virchow was second to none at reconstructing the skeleton of an extinct mammoth, or anatomising a dead cat; but whenever any of these scholars presumed to ape the character of statesmen, they rarely failed to present a humbling exemplification of the truth of the maxim about the cobbler and his last. To the erudition of an Aristotle these men added the invective powers of a Thersites; but they were often smitten down with their own weapons, as the bully of the Grecian camp was reduced to silence by the truncheon of Ulysses. "This military reorganisation of yours," said Dr. Gneist, "has the Cain's mark of perjury on its brow." "That expression of yours," retorted General von Roon, "bears the stamp of arrogance and impudence."

Bismarck challenges Professor Virchow.

The Lower Chamber was the constant scene of most unseemly brawls; but the violence was chiefly on the side of the Opposition, composed, as it was, of party politicians to whom men like Paul de Cassagnac could never have held the candle. Bismarck, however, never lost his temper—as

what strong man ever does lose his temper?—and thus had a great advantage over his foes who, though enlightened, lacked refinement of manner. On one or two occasions, even, the heat of wordy strife had like to have led to blows. Dr. Virchow once roundly accused Bismarck of unveracity. "What do you mean to accomplish, gentlemen, with a tone like this?" asked Bismarck. "Do you really wish us to settle our political quarrels after the manner of the Horatii and the Curiatii? If so,"—and, suiting the action to the word, home he went and sent a challenge to his slanderer. But the learned professor refused to expose science to the risk of prematurely losing one of her high priests; the challenge, however, had the effect of making him and his partisans somewhat warier henceforth with the wagging of their tongues.*

* "The political friends of the professor counselled him to decline, and he received many addresses of approval from the country. This incident caused a great sensation at the time, but it was nearly forgotten by the present generation when it was cited, not long ago, in a singular way in court. A gentleman was on trial for sending a challenge—a species of pleasure that the German laws have long denied, except to the military—and, in mitigation of sentence, the defendant referred to the case of Bismarck *versus* Virchow, and observed that Bismarck had never been prosecuted for his challenge. The judge replied that he was not prosecuted because he was protected by the military uniform which, as an officer in the *Landwehr*, he is accustomed and entitled to wear."—"*German Political Leaders*," *apud* Virchow, by H. Tuttle.

"With regard to the Virchow affair," wrote Bismarck to a friend, who had taken him to book for the incident of his challenge, "I am past the time of life when one takes advice from flesh and blood in such things. When I stake my life for a matter, I do so in that faith which I have strengthened by long and severe struggling, but also in honest and humble prayer to God; a faith which no word of man, even that of a friend in Christ and a servant of His Church, can overthrow."—*Letter of Bismarck to André von Roman, 26th December*, 1865.

It really seemed, as Bismarck told Parliament, as if its stubborn hostility to the policy of the Government "had placed it in the position of the false mother in the Judgment of Solomon—fiercely bent on having its will, even though the country should thus be ruined." The first session of the Landtag after the Danish war (January to June, 1865) was one long scene of quarrel, recrimination and combat. Again did the Chamber reject the new military law, which had already borne such enticing fruit; it firmly refused to cover the expenses which had bound another laurel round the brow of Prussia, and enriched her with two fair provinces; nor would it listen to the prayer of the Government for ten million thalers to build a fleet, now that at last the nation had acquired the splendid harbour of Kiel to shelter one. Parliament acknowledged the necessity of creating a navy, but it would not give a Bismarck Ministry money to make it with. To those who thus wanted protection but would not pay for it, Bismarck could only reply that "existence on the basis of the Phæacians was doubtless more comfortable than that of the Spartans;" but that, as Düppel and Alsen had been conquered in despite of them, so he hoped Prussia would also yet get a fleet for all their "impotent negation." But it was not to be expected that a Chamber which still showed all the enthusiasm of spectacled idealists for the independence of the Duchies—though it could come to no decision with regard to their disposal—should vote the creation of a Prussian fleet, that implied the possession of Kiel. It

"Impotent negation."

was truly affecting to see how the parliamentary professors differed in their theory of things from the heathen philosopher (quoted by Touchstone), who robustly held that "grapes were made to eat, and lips to open."

Holding with the heathen philosopher, the King of Prussia, as we have seen, had acquired the complete proprietorship of Lauenburg by buying up Austria's condominate rights over that Duchy. But in the following session (15th of January to 22nd of February, 1866) the Chamber boldly declared this transaction to be null and void, for the reasons that the country had not been asked to ratify a treaty concluded by the Crown, and also because, without the assent of Parliament, the King (by the Constitution) "could not at the same time be ruler of foreign realms" (*Reiche*). In a speech of brilliant force and wit, Bismarck endeavoured to prove the insufficiency of the former reason (the assent of the Chamber being only necessary for "commercial or other such treaties as imposed new burdens on the State);"* while the attempt to argue Lauenburg a "foreign realm" he made light of as a mere "linguistic quibble," as, indeed, it was.† Bismarck denounced the

* See Art. 48 of Prussian Constitution in Appendix.

† "By such linguistic quibbles it might at last be proved that an old man is a child, and a child an old man, because the limits of their respective ages cannot be established;" and he quoted from Shakespeare to prove the contrast between Duchy and Kingdom (*Reiche*):—

> "Nay, if thou be that princely eagle's bird,
> Show thy descent by gazing 'gainst the sun:
> For chair and dukedom, throne and kingdom say;
> Either that is thine, or else thou wert not his."
>
> *Henry VI.*, Part III., Act ii., Scene 1.

conduct of the Chamber in this affair as an audacious assault on the constitutional prerogatives of the Crown; as he also repelled its protest against the ruling of the Supreme Court, that slanderous attacks on the Government did not come within the freedom of speech guaranteed to deputies by the Charter,* as an infringement of the King's rights.

The resolutions of the Chamber on the Lauenburg and liberty-of-speech affairs were returned to it by Bismarck, with a severe reprimand for having so far forgotten itself; and the Chamber very nearly went out of its senses with wrath at the affront thus put upon it. But Bismarck cared nothing for its ravings or its reasonings, and, before the deputies had time to come to a calmer state of mind, they were sent home like fractious schoolboys. Shortly afterwards the Chamber was again dissolved. Two days previous to this an incident occurred which showed Bismarck to what extent the bitter hatred and hostility, of which he had become the constant butt in the Chamber, had also possessed the heart of the nation.

About five o'clock on the afternoon of the 7th of May, 1866, Bismarck was returning to his residence in the Wilhelm Strasse from the Palace, where he had been closeted with the King. He had reached a point in the central avenue of the Linden nearly opposite the Russian embassy—a spot afterwards to derive additional notoriety from the crime of Hödel—when he was startled by two shots

Bismarck is shot at by Ferdinand Blind.

* See Art. 86 of Prussian Constitution in Appendix.

close behind him, and turning round he beheld a young man—not long apparently out of his teens—coolly aiming at him with a six-chambered revolver. To grasp the wrist of the assassin with one hand and his throat with the other was, with his intended victim, the work of a moment; but the ruffian, wrestling desperately, managed to fire off three of his other bullets—two of which actually grazed the Minister's breast and shoulder. A feeling of momentary weakness overcame him, but quickly recovering his presence of mind, and collecting his vast strength, he closed with his would be murderer and held him fast as in a vice. It chanced that at this moment a battalion of the Guards, with the band playing the national air, was marching down the Linden; and, handing over the assassin to the care of the soldiers who led him off to gaol, Bismarck continued his way home. He afterwards related that the incident had been complicated by the passers-by at first taking him for the murderer, as, indeed, it was natural for them, in the confusion of the moment, to infer that the criminal was the big, aggressive-looking man with a smoking revolver in his hand—for he had wrenched it from his assailant—and not the smooth-faced youth struggling in his iron grasp. Arrived home, Bismarck sat down and wrote a brief account of the incident to the King, and then, entering the drawing-room, greeted the several guests assembled for dinner as if nothing had happened. "They have shot at me, my child," he at last whispered to his wife; "but don't fear, there is no harm done. Let us now go in to dinner." The Minister

had been saved only by a miracle, as the family doctor declared, and great was the joy of his friends. Presently the King came in to offer his congratulations, and his example was soon followed by all the great ones of the capital.* A serenading multitude in the street, and an address of thanks from Bismarck's balcony closed the exciting day—a day, alas! that only opened the era of attempts at political murder in Berlin.†

The inaugurator of this era, who committed suicide the same night in his cell, proved to be a young man of 22, called Ferdinand Cohen—the stepson of Karl Blind, a democratic fugitive from Baden living in London, whose name he had likewise adopted. A youth of good education, he had in South Germany studied agriculture both in theory and practice, but the de-

* Among the numerous congratulations which poured in upon Bismarck after this "*attentat*," was one from the Marquis Wielpolski who, in 1861, had held a ministerial portfolio at Warsaw, and been himself the object of a similar attack. "Despite my business," replied Bismarck, "which leaves me not a moment's rest day or night, I cannot refrain from personally thanking you for the congratulation and the good wishes with which you were kind enough to honour me. You yourself know from experience what sort of a life I have; its dangers, its ingratitudes, its privations, insufficiency of time and strength—and amidst all that the only consolation one has is the doing of one's duty and living up to the vocation which God has given us. . . . Think not that discouragement makes me speak thus; for I believe in victory without knowing whether I shall live to see it; but I am often overcome with a feeling of weariness."

† The marvellous escape of the Minister-President naturally formed the topic of excited conversation at table, and after dinner in the drawing-room, where the Countess—so it was trustworthily told us—expressed her opinion of the would-be assassin by energetically avowing that if "she were in Heaven, and saw the villain standing on the top of a ladder leading down to Hell, she would have no hesitation in giving him a push." "Hush, my dear," whispered her husband, tapping her gently on the shoulder from behind; "you would not be in Heaven yourself with such thoughts as these!"

votion to this sober pursuit had not prevented his mind from becoming a seed-field for those delirious, yet consistent, idealisms with which the heads of German students are so often dangerously ablaze. He had been an eager listener to the rant of republicans and the ravings of the doctrinaires; and, like another Balthazar Gérard, he had journeyed to Berlin with the set resolve to rid the nation of a man who was universally denounced as the oppressor of Prussian liberties, and the diabolic disturber of German peace.*

The divided spoil.

But, while the parliamentary conflict was still raging, how had the latter charge meanwhile been gaining ground in the public mind? Prussian diplomacy is secrecy itself; but still the nation instinctively felt that mischief was brewing,

* Referring to this subject in the Reichstag (9th May, 1884), Bismarck said of his would-be assassin, that "his dead body became the object of a cult; that ladies of considerable name, whose husbands enjoyed a certain reputation in the scientific world, crowned it with laurels and flowers; and that this was tolerated by the police—the mass of the ordinary officials, perhaps even some of the higher ones, being rather on his side."—With a view to correcting certain erroneous inferences from the Chancellor's statement, Herr Karl Blind wrote to *The Times* (of 29th May, 1884) as follows: "The nobility of his character and the patriotic nature of the motives which carried him away to the deed were universally acknowledged at the time, even by political adversaries. His death was made the theme of a eulogistic poem by Marie Kurz, the wife of Hermann Kurz. His portrait, crowned with oak leaves, was worn by many militiamen in the south on their helmets when they were called out for the war. With 'Nihilist' ideas he had nothing whatever to do. His object was to prevent what the Imperial Chancellor, in recent years, himself has twice designated as a 'war between brethren' (*Bruderkrieg*).—I hold a number of letters of warmest sympathy, written in the days of deepest grief and sorrow, to my wife and myself, by men of political standing in Germany, of the moderate National Liberal as well as of the Progressist and Democratic parties."

and that the Convention of Gastein was the chief ingredient in the evil broth. No sooner had Bismarck signed this document, which was designed to "patch up rents in the edifice of peace," than he began to sneer at it. "Do you mean to break the Convention of Gastein," bluntly at last demanded Count Karolyi of the Prussian Minister-President. "No," replied the latter, with equal directness; "but even if I did, do you suppose I should" (be such a fool as to) "tell you?" This was in March (1866), barely six months after the conclusion of the agreement which provisionally assigned Holstein to Austria, and Schleswig to Prussia (pending the final determination of their fate); and, in the interval, much had occurred to show the folly and the danger of the arrangement. Marshal Gablenz was appointed governor of the Austrian province, while General Manteuffel, for Prussia, kept an iron grip of her share of the spoil; and, in the actions of these two dictators, the adverse views and aims of their respective Governments soon became clearly reflected. Mindful of the fact that the parties to the Convention of Gastein had reserved the question of ducal sovereignty for future settlement, Manteuffel acted, or claimed to act, in consonance with the understanding that, while each ally administered one province, they still had common rights over both. When, therefore, a great popular ovation was accepted by the Prince-Pretender at Eckernförde (in Schleswig), he was sharply requested by the Prussian governor to avoid such conduct in the future on pain of certain arrest. On the other hand, in Holstein, where (at Kiel)

the Pretender kept a sort of Court, his aspirations were openly, and even ostentatiously, favoured by the Austrian governor.

It is not within the scope of our narrative to inquire into the succession claims of the Prince of Augustenburg. These claims were pronounced invalid by the crown-lawyers at Berlin; and though the foes of Prussia naturally sneered at the judgment of these authorities on such a subject, impartial minds could not deny that this decision was supported by very sound and solid reasoning. While thus the right of a conqueror seemed to be fortified by the authority of law, it was natural that Prussia should look with anything but indulgence on the growing agitation in the Duchies in favour of the Pretender. As a slight set-off, it is true, against that agitation, about a score of Schleswig-Holstein noblemen had petitioned Bismarck for annexation to Prussia; but the great bulk of the population still demanded the right of deciding their own destiny, and it was not doubtful how they would decide. Were they not the best judges of their own happiness? "No doubt," replied Bismarck; "but, for Germany and me, the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the paramount consideration." The Austrians encouraged the Schleswig-Holsteiners to clamour for a representative meeting of their estates; and Marshal Gablenz sat with folded hands while the Holstein Press indulged in boundless abuse of Prussia, while the political societies openly carried on their propaganda for the Pretender, and while demagogic

Bad outlook for the Augustenburg Pretender.

leaders from South Germany stumped the province and stirred up the people to assert their sovereign rights.

The quarrel ripens.

But at last the cup of Prussian impatience became full to overflowing when (January, 1866) the Austrian Government specially sanctioned, at Altona, the holding of a mass meeting, which demanded the convocation of the estates and cheered "the lawful and beloved Prince Frederick." Within a week after this event Bismarck had sent to Vienna two long and emphatic despatches in which he specified his grievances; accused Austria of encouraging in the Duchies that "spirit of revolution" which, as a common danger, she had agreed with Prussia to combat;* charged her with pursuing "an aggressive policy in Holstein," and declared it to be "an imperative necessity that clearness should be brought into their mutual relations." To these remonstrances Count Mensdorff returned so evasive and ungracious a reply, that soon afterwards (28th February) there was held at Berlin a Cabinet Council which the governor of Schleswig (Manteuffel), the Chief of the General Staff (Moltke), and the Prussian Ambassador in Paris (Count Goltz) were commanded to attend.

To this, at last, it had come! The minute-hand of time was fast approaching the hour which Bismarck was

* In the previous October, Austria had supported the action of Prussia when Bismarck threatened the Senate of the Free City of Frankfort for having permitted a large number of deputies, from various German Assemblies, to meet and denounce the Convention of Gastein, and champion the aspirations of the Schleswig-Holsteiners; and this was the last step but one which the two allied Powers took in common in the Diet.

impatiently awaiting; and meanwhile he informed Count Karolyi that, "convinced of the impossibility of any longer acting with Austria, Prussia resumed her liberty of action and would only consult her own interests." These interests demanded that her hold over the Duchies should not be loosened by her ally and rival, and, moreover, it concerned her honour not to recede from the path on which she had already so far advanced. The sovereignty of the Duchies was still, it is true, conjointly vested in the two Powers; but Austria had turned a deaf ear to the overtures of Prussia for acquiring Schleswig-Holstein as she had already acquired Lauenburg, or by some other equitable arrangement; there was no possible chance of their agreeing as to the ultimate disposal of the conquered provinces; and their conjoint dominion had already become intolerable both to the rulers and the ruled. There had thus arisen a problem which clearly could only be solved by the sword. What was to be done? At the Cabinet Council above referred to, it was virtually resolved to expel Austria from a position which she seemed resolutely bent on using to the detriment of Prussia and the German cause. But how was this to be effected with a still greater semblance of Austrian wrong and Prussian right?

The Cabinet meeting at Berlin, attended by Moltke, was speedily answered by a "Marshal's Council" at Vienna (10th March), at which General Benedek assisted; and soon thereafter masses of troops began to be secretly pushed up from

"The clink of hammers closing rivets up."

Hungary, and other outlying parts of the Empire, toward Bohemia and Moravia. "What is the meaning of all these warlike preparations on our frontier?" demanded Berlin. "Pooh," replied Vienna, "precautions merely against a repetition of these troublesome anti-Jewish riots in that quarter." But Berlin knew better, and soon, too, throughout all Prussia nought was heard but the ominous sound of the "armourers accomplishing the knights," and of the "clink of hammers closing rivets up." The development of the great German drama had now reached that point where the final sword-combat between the two leading characters in an historical tragedy is preceded by "alarms and excursions," and by mutual reproaches deepening into the bitter recriminations of deadly hate.

Questions and answers.

The first of these recriminations was contained in a despatch of Count Mensdorff to the Federal Governments (16th March), in which he proposed to submit the Schleswig-Holstein question to the decision of the Diet, and called upon them to mobilise their forces on behalf of threatened Austria. Bismarck soon got wind of this proceeding, and on his part (24th March) inquired of the same Governments to what extent Prussia could count on their assistance in the event of her coming to blows with Austria, at the same time dwelling on the pressing need of Federal reform. "I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir," exclaimed the players in chorus. "Oh, reform it altogether," returned Hamlet-Bismarck, with an impatient wave of the hand, "if you would have Germany escape

the fate of Poland. How can you adjudicate on us and our quarrels, when you are in such a hopelessly chaotic and quarrelsome state yourselves? Summon a German Parliament, based on direct and universal suffrage, to aid you with your deliberations. When you have fixed the day of its meeting, we shall then tell you precisely what *our* reform schemes are, but not till then; and if you decline this condition precedent of ours—a fig for you and all your tall talk about national development."*

On the very day before Bismarck spoke thus to the Federal Governments (27th April), Austria inquired of Prussia whether she would agree with her to submit to the verdict of the Diet as to the disposal of Holstein, and Bismarck answered with an emphatic "No!" The Diet was not a party either to the Treaty of Vienna or the Convention of Gastein, and therefore he could not, and would not, acknowledge its competence. The contention of Bismarck came to this, that, in the matter of the Duchies, Prussia could neither submit to any court of law nor bench of arbitration whatsoever; and that if she could not come to a peaceful agreement on the subject with Austria alone, then—what then?

Violent scene of altercation between the Giant Brothers.

Such being the disposition of Prussia, it was no wonder that Austria began to arm to the teeth; and doubtless Bismarck rejoiced to think that the semblance of additional righteousness would be lent his cause by the fact of Austria having been thus induced to commit the grave

* Strictly in accordance with the terms of Bismarck's Despatches of 24th March and 27th April, given by Hahn.

mistake of first buckling on her armour. While diplomatic Notes were passing between Vienna and Berlin, Austrian troops had been pouring up towards the Prussian frontier; till at last, as a counter-precaution, King William was prevailed upon to issue orders for the partial mobilisation of his army in the threatened quarter. "Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?" demanded Vienna of Berlin. "No, sir," replied Berlin to Vienna, "I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir."* In this case it was very hard for Europe to say which was the wolf, and which the lamb—so hard did both protest their innocence. But Austria was the first to complain, as she had been the first to arm, and there ensued an equally able and amusing correspondence on the subject of their respective armaments.†

"Nothing is further from the intentions of the Emperor," wrote Count Karolyi to Count Bismarck, "than to attack Prussia."

"Nothing is further from the intentions of the King," replied Count Bismarck to Count Karolyi, "than to wage an aggressive war against Austria."‡

Austria: "Why, then, these warlike acts of yours?"

Prussia: "Why this secret massing of troops by you?"

Austria: "Tut, you exaggerate all that."

Prussia: "Nay, it is you who misrepresent and conceal the facts."

Austria (who thought to catch her rival in a trap): "Oh, come,

* "Romeo and Juliet," Act i., Scene 1.

† Each of the above utterances, put into the mouths of the two Powers, accurately expresses the essence of so many despatches exchanged between them on the subject of their respective armaments, from 31st March to 4th May, 1866. *Vide* Hahn.

‡ *Ipsissima verba*, from despatches of 31st March and 6th April, given by Hahn.

a pest on all this aimless quibbling. Here is a definite proposal. Will you disarm, if we do?"

Prussia (much too wary to fall into the trap): "Certainly, with the greatest pleasure. Only begin the withdrawal of your forces threatening our frontier, and we shall at once demobilise in proportion."

Austria (after a stage "aside" in sibilant, savage tones): "Stay, we ought to have said that, though ready to recall our troops from Bohemia, we must concentrate them against Italy, who now seems bent upon assailing us; but this trifling detail need not affect *your* conditional promise to demobilise."

Prussia: "Oho, is that your game? You only now speak of disarming in Bohemia, but what of Moravia and Galicia? Italy, believe us (*for we know*), is not meditating an 'unprovoked' attack upon you; and if *she* is arming, it is only because *you* have set the example. You have shifted your ground, you are equivocating, and that we cannot endure. Therefore, to be plain with you, reduce your whole army at once to the peace-footing, and we shall do the same, otherwise our agreement must fall to the ground."

Austria (with a look of mingled rage, duplicity, and distrust): "Let it fall, then, and God defend the right!"

Italy and Prussia.

Italy arming too? Yes, in hot and secret haste, and Austria could not possibly be blind to the reason why. With the haughty contempt of the despot who overrates his power, she had rejected the overtures of the Cabinet of Florence for the cession of Venetia, and thus had driven Italy into the extended arms of Prussia. Between the dynasties of these two States, both engaged in the work of national unification, there could not but exist a deep natural sympathy; and this feeling was intensified by common hatred of the Power which stood between them and their aims. Not only to secure the neutrality of Prussia's non-German neighbours, but also to enlist

Italy on her side in the coming struggle, was now Bismarck's great object; and he achieved it with consummate skill.

Bismarck had nothing whatever in him of the Exeter Hall type of statesman. Abstractly, he cared no more about the emancipation of the Venetians from the Austrian yoke than he concerned himself about the fate of the exiles in Siberia, or of the slaves in the Soudan; but it suited his patriotic purpose to persuade the Italians that their northern brothers should no longer remain under the bondage of Austria, as it had suited his purpose a few years before to persuade the Czar that he must on no account relax his despotic grip of the denationalised Poles. He wooed Italy with a well-feigned love; nor did he fail to prepare her heart for the final avowal of his affection by simulating those acts of generosity which spring from genuine regard. In the teeth of much opposition he had, in 1865, induced the Zollverein to conclude a commercial treaty with Italy, favourable to the latter; and he was careful to acquaint the Cabinet of Florence with the progress of his quarrel with Austria. So well, indeed, did he play his game of courtship, that the proposal of alliance came, not from the wooer, but the wooed. At the beginning of April, General Govone arrived in Berlin from Florence with full powers to come to terms with Prussia, and on the 8th of that month he signed with Bismarck a secret Treaty of Offensive and Defensive Alliance, by which Italy undertook to draw the sword for Prussia should she have to go to war with Austria within three

months; while each agreed neither to conclude peace nor an armistice without the assent of the other, and it was well understood what the territorial conditions of peace would have to be.

Austria suspected the existence of this secret Treaty; France knew of it.* France! How can we describe the dark, shifting, and tortuous policy pursued by the Emperor Napoleon during all this momentous time – a policy which was equally that of a presumptuous busy-body, an unscrupulous haggler, and a midnight thief? The jealousy and the malice of the French nation itself had been aroused by the success of the Prussian arms against Denmark; a Protestant Power was bidding fair to rally all Germany round her and contest the palm of continental supremacy with *la grande nation;* and *that* the *grande nation* could by no possibility endure, or even think of. Evidence enough on this head was furnished by a debate in the Corps Législatif,† when M. Thiers delivered a speech of truly incredible arrogance against the designs and ambition of Prussia, producing a perfect storm of applause—a storm of that kind which is the proverbial seed of the future whirlwind. The Emperor himself, while equally jealous of the rise of Prussia and of the statesman who now controlled her destinies, was much less effusive with his hatred. Nay, he even feigned to be moved with love towards the Power whose expansion it was his

France and Prussia.

* Si on voulait uniquement ajouter quelques clauses supplémentaires au traité que nous connaissons . . . ."—*Ma Mission en Prusse, par Le Comte Benedetti*, p. 121.

† May 3rd, 1866.

secret aim to limit. Bismarck has himself declared that "the ill-humour exhibited towards us (by Napoleon) on account of the Treaty of Gastein, arose from the apprehension that a consolidation of the alliance between Prussia and Austria would deprive the Paris Cabinet of the fruits it hoped to derive from the policy it had adopted."*

Napoleon's aims.

What was that policy? According to the Emperor himself, it aimed at the "preservation of the European equilibrium, and the maintenance of the work which we have helped to raise in Italy."†—"Italy shall be free from the Alps to the Adriatic!" And how did the man of the Tuileries propose to preserve the balance of power? In simple language, by setting Prussia and Austria by the ears, and by reaping himself the profits of their quarrel. France, he thought to himself, cannot have too much power; but her neighbours can, and they shall not have it. Besides, was it not necessary for the criminal who committed the *coup d'état* to re-ingratiate himself with indignant Europe by figuring as the humane champion of oppressed nationalities, and to fortify his hold on the hearts of his own countrymen by gratifying their lust of *gloire* and their love of aggrandisement? And how could their lust of *gloire* be better pandered to than by their Imperial chief posing as the arbiter of the Continent; how their love of aggrandisement be better

* Bismarck's Circular Despatch of July 29th, 1870, on various French overtures and private treaties.

† Memorandum by the Emperor to M. Drouyn de Lhuys, of June 11th, 1866, given by Mr. Jerrold, iv., p. 322.

indulged than by his presenting them with the left bank of the Rhine? This he coveted with a deep and consuming desire, and cast about to possess it. Could he but help Prussia—thus he calculated—to accomplish her ends, he would demand the cession of the Rhine as the price of his aid. Should Prussia, refusing his conditional aid, be beaten by Austria—and he sincerely hoped and believed she would—then he might claim the same territory as the equivalent of his intervention in favour of the defeated. It is true that when the two Giant Brothers began to feel for their swords and shake their gauntleted fists at one another, Napoleon, like another Iago feigning horror at the brawl between Cassio and Roderigo, made a show of proposing that they should submit their quarrel to a European Congress at Paris —a proposal which, though accepted by Prussia, was virtually rejected by her rival; but he had previously plied Bismarck with offers of an alliance against Austria, whereof the main objects were the cession of the Duchies to Prussia, of Venetia to Italy, and of more than the left bank of the Rhine to France.*

* That there may be no incredulity on this point, we will here quote the text of the Treaty (proposed by confidential agents of the Emperor) from Bismarck's famous Circular Despatch of 29th July, 1870, which followed and explained the publication of the notorious Benedetti Treaty, to be afterwards referred to. Bismarck wrote: "In May, 1866, these pretensions (of Napoleon) assumed the form of an offensive and defensive alliance, of which the following extract has remained in my hands":—

(1.) En cas de congrès, poursuivre d'accord la cession de la Vénétie à l'Italie et l'annexion des Duchés à la Prusse. (2.) Si le congrès n'aboutit pas, alliance offensive et défensive. (3.) Le Roi de Prusse commencera les hostilités dans les 10 jours après la séparation du congrès. (4.) Si le congrès ne se réunit pas, la Prusse attaquera dans 30 jours après la signa-

It will always redound to the honour of Bismarck that Napoleon's bargaining for a bit of his Fatherland secretly revolted him; but, like a wise man, he resolved to profit by this incredible French ignorance of the character of German statesmen.

"The impossibility," he said,* "of accepting any proposal of the kind was clear to me from the first, but I thought it useful and in the interest of peace to leave the French statesmen their favourite illusions as long as possible, without giving them even my verbal assent. I assumed that the destruction of hopes entertained by France would endanger peace, which it was the interest of Germany and Europe to maintain . . . I kept silence regarding the demands made, and pursued a dilatory course, without making any promises."

It is but just to add that statements, both of M. Benedetti † and General La Marmora,‡ have been twisted into an assumption of Bismarck's readiness to treat with the foreigner for a slice of his native soil; but, after all, this apparent readiness cannot be proved to have had any but a deceptive and "dilatory" object; and when once taunted in Parliament with the charges

ture du présent traité. (5.) L'Empereur des Français déclarera la guerre à l'Autriche, dès que les hostilités seront commencées entre l'Autriche et la Prusse. (6.) On ne fera pas de paix séparée avec l'Autriche. (7.) La paix se fera sous les conditions suivantes: La Vénétie à l'Italie. A la Prusse les territoires allemands ci-dessous (7 à 8 millions d'âmes au choix) plus la réforme fédérale dans le sens prussien.—Pour la France le territoire entre Moselle et Rhin sans Coblence ni Mayence: comprenant 500,000 âmes de Prusse, la Bavière rive gauche du Rhin; Birkenfeld, Homburg, Darmstadt 213,000 âmes. (8.) Convention militaire et maritime entre la France et la Prusse dès la signature. (9.) Adhésion du Roi d'Italie.

* In the same despatch.

† "*Ma Mission en Prusse*," despatch of 4th June, p. 165.

‡ "*A little more Light*."

brought against him by his Italian foe, he indignantly replied:

"I never pledged or promised any one the cession of even so much as a (German) village or hay-field; and I hereby declare everything that circulates, and has been said on this subject, to be wicked and audacious lies invented to blacken my character."*

It may seem incredible, but it is nevertheless true, that while Napoleon was tempting Bismarck with offers of an alliance against Austria, he was at the same time secretly treating with Francis Joseph for the cession of Venetia in return for Silesia, the province most proudly prized by the Prussian King and people.† And while negotiating separately and secretly with the two sworn enemies, wholly with an eye to his own advantage, he affected to prove his own disinterestedness by suggesting the submission of their quarrel to a European Congress. Bismarck did not believe that any congress or convention whatever could supply the remedy of which his suffering country stood so much in need, but, yielding to the inclination of the King, who deemed that his pride would allow him to concede to Europe what his honour forbade him to grant to Austria alone, he accepted the

* Bismarck's reply to speech of the Clerical deputy, Herr von Mallinckrodt, in the Reichstag, 16th January, 1874, during the heat of the Kulturkampf.

† Says Professor von Sybel, Keeper of the Prussian State Archives, in his pamphlet on "Napoleon III.," published 1873 (p. 63):—"While thus he (Napoleon) spoke openly for Prussia at Auxerre, he was carrying on profoundly secret negotiations with Austria . . . And thus it was that Napoleon concluded with her (Austria) on the 9th June a secret Treaty, by which, in the event of a successful war, the Emperor Francis Joseph was to cede Venetia, and receive for it Silesia, at the cost of Prussia."

proposal of Napoleon.* Austria, however, as he hoped and knew she would, rejected it; and when, in presence of M. Benedetti, the despatch from Paris announcing the failure of the Congress was brought to him, Bismarck joyfully exclaimed: "*Vive le Roi!*"†

"Which of us shall fire the powder?"

"Well then," said Bismarck, to General Govone, "which of us is now going to apply fire to the powder, Prussia or Italy?"‡ And to Count Barral, the Italian Ambassador:§ "You would do us excellent service by attacking first." Why? Because King William still clung to hopes of peace, and could not be prevailed upon by his eager Minister to draw the sword; and his warlike Minister, whose only thought now was to devise a *casus belli*, calculated that if Italy could only be induced to precipitate the conflict, the scruples of the King would be finally overcome. "If you only knew," said Bismarck to an opponent shortly before the war, "what a frightful struggle it has caused me to persuade His Majesty that we must fight, you would also comprehend that I am obeying the iron law of necessity."‖

* England and Russia joined France in proposing a Peace Congress at Paris; but the proposal fell through in consequence of its conditional acceptance by Austria, who promised her presence only under a previous guarantee that "in the Conference there should be no mention of an increase of power or territorial aggrandisement to any of the invited States," which was the sole object of the Congress.

† Despatch of M. Benedetti to M. Drouyn de Lhuys, 4th June, 1866.

‡ Despatch of General Govone, 3rd June, to his Government, given in General La Marmora's revelations.

§ Despatch of 5th June, *idem*.

‖ "His assurances (to Austria)," wrote Sir A. Malet, "that nothing was further from the intentions of his royal master than an offensive war, had at the same time a basis of truth in the known dispositions of his

Personally attached to the Emperor Francis Joseph, the King could not reconcile himself to the idea of breaking with the dynastic traditions of the past; and even when all hope of peace had vanished, he entered into secret negotiations with his brother-Sovereign without the knowledge of his own Minister-President.* Furthermore, the King had "religious, nay, even superstitious scruples against incurring the responsibility for a European war;" † and these scruples were doubtless deepened by the protests and peace-addresses which came pouring in from all parts of the country—from public meetings, and corporations, and chambers of commerce—invoking "a curse on the heads of the authors" ‡ of the impending war. This popular agitation against Bismarck's policy had, as we have seen, produced a fanatic who tried to take his life; but the fact of the attempt operated very differently on the mind of its object, and on that of his royal master. In addition to all this, the King's ear was accessible to the tales of Court intrigue, which never fails to misrepresent the aims and asperse the character of a royal favourite; but Bismarck gave a signal proof of his

King William's scruples.

Prussian Majesty; but the Minister was labouring night and day to produce that change in the King's sentiments, which he in the end succeeded in effecting; and in nothing that he undertook, perhaps, did this remarkable man encounter greater difficulties, or show more consummate ability, than in bringing King William to break with tradition, to espouse his animosities, to see in fine with the eyes of his Minister-President."

* Bismarck to General Govone, as reported by the latter to Florence, 3rd June, 1866.

† *Idem.*

‡ From an address to the King by the Committee of the National Union in Berlin.

fixity of purpose and his strength of will in overcoming, if not, perhaps, removing all these scruples of his master against recourse to the terrible remedy of war. Exulting in the failure of the proposed Peace Congress, and eager for a pretence to commence hostilities that would put an end to an armed state of suspense which was beginning to be intolerable, Bismarck urged Italy to draw the sword; but Italy preferred to adhere no less to the terms of her secret Treaty with Prussia, than to her solemn promise to France. What was to be done? Fortune and the folly of Austria played into the hands of Bismarck. Swift and bewildering was now the march of events. Within little more than a week from the failure of the Congress scheme (4th June), Prussia had withdrawn from the Germanic Confederation, and virtually declared war against Austria. How, then, had this conclusion been precipitated?

On the 1st of June, Austria, whose patience had now been skilfully wearied out, declared that, being unable to agree with Prussia as to the disposal of the Duchies, she now submitted the question to the decision of the Diet; and at the same time she issued orders for convoking the estates of Holstein, so that the will of the province as to its own fate might also be consulted. "What! Interfere with our condominate rights in that way!" exclaimed Prussia in overflowing wrath. "By appealing to the Diet you have cast aside the Convention of Gastein and returned to the Treaty of Vienna, and therefore deprived yourself of the exclusive right to convoke the estates of

The Prussian Giant at last seizes all the spoil.

Holstein, where *we* have interests as well as *you*. Therefore you, General Manteuffel, march some of your troops at once into Holstein, for the protection of our common sovereign rights which Austria has so defiantly outraged."* Into Holstein accordingly from Schleswig promptly marched (7th June) grim Manteuffel and his helmeted men, before whom Marshal Gablenz and his kepied Austrians, fearing to risk an unequal conflict, at first withdrew from Kiel to Altona, and then bundled out of the Duchy as nimbly as ever they could—away over the Elbe, away to Hanover, over the hills and far away. On the approach of the Prussians, too, the Augustenburg Pretender, snatching up a few necessaries, vanished from Kiel like a streak of lightning; and, on the 12th of June, the soldiers of King William found themselves in sole and actual possession of "Schleswig-Holstein sea-surrounded."

Two days previously Bismarck re-intimated to the Diet his readiness to accept its treatment of the Schleswig-Holstein question on condition of its previously accepting his proposal of Federal reform, which comprised the exclusion of Austria from the new Confederation, and a national Parliament that "would act as a counterpoise to dynastic, and therefore selfish, interests in adjudicating on the fate of the Duchies."† To this Austria promptly replied

The Giant Brothers stand up to fight.

* Bismarck's despatches of 3rd and 4th June, and declaration in Official Gazette of 5th June.

† The draft of this Constitution served as the basis of the Charter of the North German Confederation which resulted from the war now imminent.

by protesting to the Diet against the masterful policy of "self-help" pursued by Prussia in Holstein, and moved for the immediate mobilisation of all the Federal army against the "wanton breaker" of the national peace. On the 14th June this motion was carried by nine to six votes. Prussia at once declared her withdrawal from a Confederation which had so flagrantly exceeded its powers. Diplomatic intercourse between Vienna and Berlin was at once broken off; the inevitable hour for which Bismarck had yearned so long had now at last struck; and Germany found herself on the eve of a war of which the prospect filled with gloom and apprehension all men save him who, like another Columbus standing ever steadfast and hopeful at the helm of the ship of State amid a mutinous and despairing crew, was guiding it slowly but surely to the shores of a new political world.

What days and nights these were at Berlin, with their physical toil and mental strain, their momentous councils, their fateful decisions, their flashing of telegrams fraught with tremendous issues! Calmly resolute and prompt was Bismarck amid the wild excitement which now prevailed throughout the nation. How was the Prussian eagle, hovering over Germany with its back to the Baltic, to dispose of the various birds of prey which formed a threatening and ever-narrowing semi-circle around it? "Look here, you ravenous and unreliable hawks," said Bismarck on the day after the Prussian eagle had escaped from the discordant aviary at Frank-

The Prussian eagle and the German hawks.

fort; "look here, you Kings of Saxony and Hanover, and you also, Elector of Hesse-Cassel! Your geographical facilities for dealing Prussia an open or secret blow are too great for us to remain in a day's doubt about your intentions. Therefore declare unto us before midnight your readiness to disarm and to accept our reform schemes, in return for our guarantee of your territorial and sovereign integrity, or—or—your blood be upon your own heads!"*

What were a Catholic and literary King John ruled by a diplomatic Dugald Dalgetty of a Beust, and a poor old blind King George boastful of his ancient lineage, and a whimsical tyrant of Elector of Hesse, to say to a terribly imperative summons of this kind? All three returned equivocal answers tantamount to "No!"—and in less than two days their capitals were in the grip of Prussian troops, the two Kings fugitives from their dominions, and the Elector on his way to Stettin as a State-prisoner! Never had there been such prompt and splendid action since Frederick the Great, *suspecting* the designs of the Saxons, marched on Dresden and *seized* the proofs of their conspiracy with his foes; or since Nelson sailed to Copenhagen and disabled the Danish fleet from serving the Corsican robber against the Mistress of the Seas. An ardent protest of innocence and manifesto from the Emperor Francis Joseph, a stirring "appeal to my

Hesse and Hanover *hors de combat.*

* Bismarck's telegraphic summonses (*Sommationen*) to Saxony, Hanover, and Hesse-Cassel (of 15th June), who had all supported Austria's motion for mobilisation of the Federal army.

people" and to the "God of battles" from King William, with a simultaneous declaration of war against Austria by Italy—and the diplomatic act of the great "German drama," in which Bismarck figured as the chief performer, was now succeeded by that phase of the quarrel in which he retired to the back of the stage to watch, with breathless Europe, the further development of the tragedy by the incidents of locked and mortal strife.

Moltke's strategy.

It is not, but we wish it were, part of our duty to follow in all its details the fascinating game of war, which now proved that Prussia was served by the first strategist as well as by the first diplomatist in Europe. The confidence with which Bismarck had spoken and acted was to a great extent the result of his complete trust in the capability of the Prussian army, and of the soldier who was its mind and brain, to make good his actions and his words; and now he drew back and watched while Hellmuth von Moltke set all the wondrous machinery in harmonious motion by a gentle pressure of his finger, and while he pored over his map in the office of the Grand General Staff at Berlin, as at a pensive game of chess, and moved his military pawns by touch of electric wire. Never before had war been waged in this way; never had any method of waging war been more swiftly, more surprisingly successful.

Plan of the campaign.

To prevent the military union of her foes in North Germany with her foes in the South, was Prussia's first care. On the rejection of her overtures to Hanover, Saxony, and Hesse-Cassel, her

troops, as we have seen, at once occupied the capitals of these three States and started in full pursuit of their defenders. After displaying its traditional valour at Langensalza, and even repulsing an inferior Prussian force, the Hanoverian army was next day compelled to surrender unconditionally to King William, whose generals had already displayed the outmanœuvring strategy of Sedan; while the Hessians—more alert than their ruler, who remained in his château at Wilhelmshöhe only to be made a State-prisoner—hurried off to effect a junction with the army of the South consisting of a Bavarian corps, 40,000 strong, and another miscellaneous corps drawn from Würtemberg, Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, and Nassau, numbering 46,000. Against this united, or rather disunited force, Prussia directed an army of the Main (first under Vogel von Falckenstein, and then Manteuffel of the Iron Hand), which, though little more than half as strong as its opponents, at last succeeded in baffling and beating them in detail. The Saxons on their part (30,000 strong), fearing to meet the Prussians singly, had marched away with all possible alacrity to join the Austrians in Bohemia under Benedek, whose total force, in consequence of Austria's having to tell off about three-tenths of her strength to face the Italians, consisted of only seven army corps (apart from the Saxons).

To encounter and scatter this Bohemian host was, of course, the chief task of the war; and to the cheerful performance of this task there addressed themselves three separate armies under the supreme command of

the all but septuagenarian King William; the first, in the centre, called the army of Bohemia, consisting of three corps, or about 100,000 men, led by Prince Frederick Charles, the King's nephew; the second, on the left, called the army of Silesia, of four corps (including the Guards), or 116,000 men, under the gallant and chivalrous Crown Prince, the King's son; and the third, or army of the Elbe, on the right, composed of three divisions, or 40,000 men, commanded by Herwarth von Bittenfeld, equal in valour to "Hereward the Last of the English."

"March separately; strike combined"—that has always been the chief maxim of Moltke's strategy—and never was the maxim more fruitful of results than in the Seven Weeks' War. Seven weeks? It was virtually all over in about seven days. Over the picturesque hills of Saxony, over the Giant Mountains into the fertile plains of Bohemia swiftly sped the three superbly-organised armies like huge and shining serpents; and ever nearer did they converge on the point which, with mathematical accuracy, had been selected as the place where they would have to coil and deliver their fatal sting of fire. Hard did the Austrians try to block the path of the triune hosts and crush them in detail; but the terribly destructive needle-gun, with the forceful lance of the lunging uhlan and the circling sabre of the ponderous cuirassier, ever cleared the way; and a series of preliminary triumphs—Münchengrätz, Nachod, Skalitz, Soor, and others—marked the progress of the three armies towards junction and

final victory. On the 23rd June, Prince Frederick Charles had crossed the Austrian frontier, and by the 29th, being now joined by Herwarth von Bittenfeld, he had reached Gitschin—the objective point of the invasion. On his left was the Crown Prince at Königinhof, distant only about a day's march, but for strategical reasons they still remained apart. Meanwhile the Austrians had all retired on Königgrätz, and Europe held its breath to watch the final throw of "the iron dice of the God of battles."

Bismarck himself, whose own words these are, was anxious to witness the decisive move in the terrible game, and on the 30th June, with the King and Counts Roon and Moltke, he started for the seat of war from Berlin, which was already half-delirious with the foretaste of victory. Of Bismarck's treachery and Straffordism, and all the rest of it, there was now no more talk; in less than a week success had made his policy not only pardonable but adorable. Berlin was wild with patriotic joy; and the royal palaces were alternately besieged by excited multitudes which, with guttural and tearful emotion, trumpeted forth the national air and Luther's hymn. Away also to the residence of the once detested, but now idolised, Minister-President surged the adulating human sea; and the music of its acclamations received a bass accompaniment from the pealing thunder which at that moment burst overhead. "See," said Bismarck, addressing the multitude from his balcony, and for once in his life making use of dramatic accessories; "see,"

Bismarck is for once in his life theatrical, and leaves for the seat of war.

he said, "the heavens are firing a salute to our victories." Next day (30th June) he left for the seat of war, and on the 1st July wrote to his wife from Sichrow:—

"To-day we started from Reichenberg, and have just arrived here. . . The whole journey was dangerous. Had the Austrians yesterday sent out their cavalry from Leitmeritz, they could have captured the King and all of us. . . Everywhere we meet prisoners. . . As far as we have gone the country does not show many traces of the war beyond down-trodden corn-fields. We hear less here than in Berlin. This castle, a very handsome one, belongs to Count Rohan, whom I used to meet every year at Gastein."

And again, on 2nd July (day before Königgrätz), from Gitschin (which had been carried by the bayonet, and formed headquarters):—

"Just arrived from Sichrow The field of battle is still covered with corpses, horses, and arms. Our victories are greater than we thought; it appears that we have over fifteen thousand prisoners, while the loss on the Austrian side, in dead and wounded, is still more, being no less than twenty thousand. Two of their corps are utterly scattered, and some of their regiments are annihilated to the last man. I have, indeed, up to now seen more Austrian prisoners than Prussian soldiers. Send me by every courier, if possible, at least one thousand cigars, price twenty thalers, for the hospital. All the wounded ask me for them. Also subscribe through the associations or with your own money for a few dozen copies of the *Kreuz-Zeitung* for the hospitals. . . Please send me a revolver, of large size, a holster pistol; . . . also a novel to read, but only one at a time."

The eve of Königgrätz.

Great was the enthusiasm with which King William and his mighty men of valour—his Bismarck, his Moltke, and his Roon—were received by his devoted troops. On the afternoon of the 2nd, after visiting the hospitals with Bismarck, the

King held a council of war, at which it was decided to let the troops rest on the morrow and collect themselves for a crushing blow. But meanwhile a daring reconnaissance had revealed the fact that the enemy, in strong force, were preparing to attack; and at midnight the King again took council of his paladins, who urged him to wait not, neither rest, but strike at the dawn of day. The plan of attack was simple. Prince Frederick Charles, with his three corps, was to assault Benedek with his five; while Herwarth von Bittenfeld should fall upon the left flank of the Austrians, and the Crown Prince come thundering down on their right. But the Crown Prince was more than twenty miles away on his cousin's left rear, and it was four in the morning before Colonel von Finckenstein, after a life and-death ride, arrived at his headquarters with the commands of the King. All depended on the punctual co-operation of the Crown Prince; but meanwhile Frederick Charles, after a rainy night like that which preceded Waterloo, advanced and opened his guns on the Austrians.

The battle began at eight o'clock, and at that hour the King, with Bismarck and his staff, appeared among his troops, and was received with ringing, thrilling, never-ending cheers. For hours the rain fell and the cannon roared, the country for miles across was enveloped in the sulphurous and suffocating pall of volumed battle-smoke, and the needle-gun wrought fearful havoc among the devoted battalions of Austria; but still they kept their ground, and put the stubborn valour and discipline of their foes to the

The battle.

severest test. The scales of battle hung pretty evenly, albeit Herwarth von Bittenfeld had already begun to hammer with might and main on the Austrian left. But the Austrian right, the right—that was where the Prussians looked for the coming of the Crown Prince as anxiously, as yearningly as Wellington had longed for the arrival of Blücher from the same direction. "Would to God the Crown Prince or darkness would come!" Moltke was almost beginning to think, when suddenly Bismarck lowered his glass and drew the attention of his neighbours to certain lines in the far distance. All telescopes were pointed thither, but the lines were pronounced to be furrows. "These are not furrows," said Bismarck, after another scrutinising look; "the spaces are not equal; they are advancing lines."* And so they were; and soon thereafter the cannon-thunder of "Unser Fritz," with the irresistible rush of the Guards up the heights of Chlum and Rosberitz, brought relief and joy to the minds of all. Violently assailed on both flanks and fiercely pressed in the centre, the Austrians now began to slacken their fire, to waver, to give way, to retreat; and soon their flight degenerated into headlong rout. Perceiving his opportunity, the King led forward in person the whole cavalry reserve of the First Army,

* The well-informed writer of a series of articles on "*Die Gesellschaft von Varzin und Friedrichsruh*," in the *Deutsche Revue* for October, 1884, relates the following incident: "At a critical point in the battle, Bismarck met Moltke and offered him a cigar. The strategist carefully selected the best weed in the Chancellor's case, and the latter took comfort, thinking to himself that if the General was still calm enough to make a choice of this kind, things could not be going so very bad with them after all."

which charged and "completely overthrew" (*total culbutiert*, wrote His Majesty)* a similar force of the foe, and then the bloody and momentous battle was won. But even then the retreating Austrians rained on the victors a murderous shell-fire, "from which Bismarck," wrote the King, "anxiously removed me." Bismarck himself wrote to his wife:—

"On the 3rd the King exposed himself to danger all day, and it was very fortunate that I was with him, for all the cautionings of others were of no effect." ("The Generals had a superstition that they, as soldiers, ought not to speak to the King about his danger, and sent me to him every time, though I, too, am a Major.") "No one would have ventured to speak as I permitted myself to do the last time, and with success too, when a whole mass of ten troopers and fifteen horses of the 6th Regiment of Cuirassiers lay wallowing in their blood close to us, and the shells whirred in unpleasant proximity to the King. The worst fortunately did not go off. Still I would rather it be so, than that he should err on the side of caution. He was very enthusiastic about his troops, and rightly so, and did not appear to notice the shells that were whirring and bursting around him. He was just as quiet and comfortable as on the Kreuzberg" (parade-ground at Berlin), "and kept on finding battalions which he wanted to thank, and say good evening to, until we were once more under fire."

Incidents of the battle as described by Bismarck.

The above may be supplemented by the following account of the same incidents, once orally given by Bismarck himself:—†

"The attention of the King was wholly fixed on the progress of the battle, and he paid not the slightest heed to the shells that were whizzing thickly around him. To my repeated request that His Majesty might not so carelessly expose himself to so murderous a

* In a letter to Queen Augusta written on the morrow of the battle.

† Quoted by Professor Müller in his "*Reichskanzler Fürst Bismarck.*"

fire, he only answered: 'The commander-in-chief must be where he ought to be.' Later on, at the village of Lipa, when the King in person had ordered the cavalry to advance, and the shells were again falling round him, I ventured to renew my request, saying: 'If your Majesty will take no care of your own person, have pity at least on your (poor) Minister-President, from whom your faithful Prussian people will again demand their King, and in the name of that people I entreat you to leave this dangerous spot.' Then the King gave me his hand with a 'Well, then, Bismarck, let us ride on a little.' So saying His Majesty wheeled his black mare and put her into as easy a canter as if he had been riding down the Linden to the Thiergarten. But for all that I felt very uneasy about him, . . . and so, edging up with my dark chesnut to Sadowa" (the name given to the King's mare *after* the battle), "I gave her a good (sly) kick from behind with the point of my boot; she made a bound forward, and the King looked round in astonishment. I think he saw what I had done, but he said nothing."

After the battle, which lasted eight hours, the King with his staff rode round the widely scattered positions of his troops, and Bismarck witnessed the touching incidents which everywhere marked his progress; how battalion after battalion—some of them mere shadows of their former selves—burst into frenzied cheering and rushed forward—officers and men—to kiss the hand, the boot, the stirrup, of their beloved leader; and how, late in the evening, the drama of the day was closed by the affecting meeting of the aged King and his heroic son—a meeting which has become as historical as that of Blücher and Wellington. But Bismarck confessed that his exultation at the stupendous victory was utterly marred by the horrible spectacle of the dead, the dying, and the wounded—about 32,000 in number—who heaped the bloody plain. The fatigue and excitement

of the day had fairly worn out even so Herculean a frame as his. To his wife he wrote:—

"At Königgrätz I rode my large chesnut, and was thirteen hours in the saddle without giving it a feed. It held out excellently, was afraid of neither shots nor corpses, nibbled ears of corn and plum-tree leaves with enjoyment at the most terrible moments, and went along swimmingly till the end, when I seemed more fatigued than my horse. My first sleeping-place was on the pavement of Horitz, without any straw, and only a carriage cushion. Every place was full of the wounded. At last the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg discovered me, and shared his room with me, R., and two adjutants, of which I was very glad on account of the rain."

Results of the battle.

It was only next day that the results of the battle of Königgrätz,* as the Prussians, or Sadowa, as the Austrians call it, became fully apparent; a battle which, in point of the numbers—430,000 men—who took part in it, ranked after the *Völkerschlacht* of Leipzig. By superior arms, superior numbers, superior discipline, and superior strategy, Prussia, at the cost of 10,000 of her sons, had won a crowning victory over her rival, who lost 40,000 men (including 18,000 prisoners), 11 standards, and 174 guns. "I have lost all," exclaimed Benedek, "except, alas, my life." It was little wonder that, on the morrow of Königgrätz, the *Moniteur* announced to the French nation that "an important event has happened." "One single encounter," Bismarck had said, "one decisive battle, and Prussia will have it in her power to dictate conditions." That battle had now been fought and

* The soldiers of King William punningly called it the battle of "*Dem König geräth's*" ("the King wins").

won; and on the evening of the next day King William received a telegram from Napoleon who, while announcing that Francis Joseph had ceded to him Venetia (in trust for Italy), offered his services as mediator for a truce and a peace.

Paris—yes, Paris—burst out into flags and illuminations.* And why? Heaven only knew, for Königgrätz,

* In the *Deutsche Rundschau* for June and July, 1881, appeared some "Reminiscences of my Life," by Count Seherr-Thoss, a nobleman who had as early as 1862, in Paris, offered to place his services at the disposal of the Prussian Minister in the event of his desiring to enter into relations with Hungary, and to play the *rôle* of a German Cavour. Starting from Paris immediately after receiving the news of Königgrätz, Count Seherr-Thoss arrived at the Prussian headquarters (Pardubitz) on the 8th July, and caused much amusement by relating how Paris had "burst out into flags and illuminations" on hearing that Francis Joseph had ceded Venetia to Napoleon. "Looking like the god Jupiter," wrote the Count, "Bismarck appeared in the simple uniform of a major, and was respectfully saluted on all sides. I had scarcely told him my errand when Bismarck interrupted me, and ran to the King to prevent his receiving General Gablenz, who had just come for the second time to demand an armistice. Returning, he offered me a cigar, and said: 'And you also put me down as a Junker and a reactionary. Appearances are often deceptive. I was obliged to play that part to attain my ends. On all sides people tried to prejudice the King against me by representing me as a Democrat in disguise. I succeeded in obtaining his entire confidence by showing him that I did not flinch even before the resistance of the Chamber when the object was the reorganisation of the army, without which war was impossible and the security of the State in danger. But in this struggle my nerves have suffered, and all my vital forces have been exhausted.' 'But I have vanquished them all,' he cried in magnificent (crescendo) wrath, smiting the table violently with his hand, and mentioning the names of three persons who seemed to have caused him special annoyance. Within the next ten minutes two despatches from Central Germany arrived, both announcing victories, and I took the liberty of asking him what would be the fate of Southern Germany. He replied: 'What could we do with those Ultramontanes? We don't want them, and, moreover, we must not swallow more than we can digest. We will not fall into the same mistake as Piedmont, which has rather weakened than strengthened itself by the annexation of Naples.'"

"that improbable and unexpected event," had filled Napoleon and his satellites "with patriotic anxiety." And yet not so much with this honourable feeling as with furious disappointment, jealousy, greed, monkey-spite, and the spirit of meddling. Napoleon had calculated on the defeat of Prussia, and one battle had made her absolute mistress of Germany. He, more than any other, had egged her on to this conflict in the belief that he was urging her on to ruin, and now he himself was caught in the snare which he had laid for others. It was not to be wondered at that a ruler, who was grossly ignorant of the true state of his own army, should have misjudged the military condition of his neighbours; and the error of judgment had landed him in a most deplorable dilemma. But the resources of our Imperial Iago were not yet exhausted. Having signally failed of his object by craftily setting two rivals by the ears, he now essayed to achieve it by posing as the magnanimous arbiter between them. That the designs of this "dishonest broker" were now again fairly baffled must always be reckoned as one of the greatest diplomatic triumphs of Bismarck, and at the same time as one of the chief causes of the subsequent conflict between France and Germany; for that the war of 1870—apart from all Spanish-succession questions—was the direct result of the war of 1866, can as little be doubted as that thunder is preceded by lightning.

Paris bursts out into flags.

Not by the Italians themselves—for their army had been soundly thrashed by the Austrians on the plains of

Verona—but by the Prussians in Bohemia, had Venetia been wrested from the grasp of Austria; and on the morrow of Königgrätz, Francis Joseph, while ceding the province to Napoleon, begged the friendly intervention of his brother-Emperor to prevent further bloodshed. "H'm!" thought some, "clearly to gain time by diplomatic palavering, and thus allow the victorious Austrian army of the South to join their defeated comrades in the North." Bismarck was equal to the occasion. "Certainly," replied King William to Napoleon's telegram, "we are prepared to accept your mediation, but of a truce there can only be talk when we get from Austria the pledge of an acceptable peace." And meanwhile the military preparations were pushed forward with the utmost energy. Prague was occupied, various minor engagements were fought with the retreating Austrians, till at last the Prussian outposts caught sight of the glittering towers of Vienna. To his wife Bismarck wrote on the 9th July (six days after Königgrätz):—

Napoleon offers himself as a "dishonest broker."

"We are getting on well, and if we do not carry our demands too far, or think that we have conquered the world, we shall attain a peace which is worth the pains. We are, however, as easily intoxicated as cast down, and I have the thankless task of pouring water in the foaming wine, and pointing out that we are not living alone in Europe, but with three neighbours. The Austrians are in Moravia, and we are already so bold as to have appointed as our headquarters for to-morrow the place where they are encamped to-day. Prisoners and guns keep on coming in to us; of the latter, we have got 180 since the 3rd. If they bring up their Southern army, we shall defeat them once more, with God's gracious aid. This confidence is quite general. I should like to kiss our fellows—they are

all so contemptuous of death, quiet, obedient, and well-behaved. In spite of empty stomachs, wet clothes, damp quarters, little sleep, and boots with the soles falling off, they are friendly towards every one. They neither plunder nor burn, but pay when they can, and eat mouldy bread. There must be a great store of the fear of God in the hearts of our common men, or all this would not be possible."

What is your "pledge of an acceptable peace?" asked Napoleon, whose conception of the duty of a "magnanimous mediator" was peculiar; for he had undertaken to intervene on behalf of fallen Austria, and yet was willing, for a solid consideration (left Rhine-bank), to arbitrate in favour of Prussia. "Pledge of peace?" answered Bismarck; "well, say, exclusion of Austria from the Confederation, erection of a new Federal State under Prussia, and her acquisition of certain lands that have hitherto interfered with her free and natural development." This rather staggered the "magnanimous mediator," who made the counter-proposal that Germany should split itself into three independent parts—Prussia, Austria, and a Confederation of the other States—which would have admirably suited his policy of *divide et impera*. "But it will not suit ours at all," rejoined Bismarck, "so let us drop the subject." "Very well, then," replied Napoleon, more in secret anger than in sorrow, "take this: 'Integrity of Austria, but its exclusion from Germany as newly constituted; the formation of a North German Union under the military leadership of Prussia; the right of the Southern States to form an independent Federal Union, but the

Bismarck parleys with Napoleon.

maintenance of a national connection between North and South Germany, said connection to be determined by a free and general consent of the various States.'"

Meanwhile M. le Comte Benedetti,* French Ambassador at Berlin, made his appearance at the Prussian headquarters, of purpose to stay the conquerors in their career; but he was plainly told, as Marshal Gablenz had twice already been told, that an armistice could not be concluded without the assent of Italy, and without a guarantee of peace. Away, therefore, he sped to Vienna with the latest proposal of his master—acting the part of a shuttle in

Benedetti appears on the scene.

* As we shall frequently have to encounter this diplomatic personage, we may as well present our readers with the following life-like sketch of him, drawn by Oskar Meding ("Gregor Samarow") in Chapter XIX. ("Bismarck's Diplomacy") of his most interesting, because historically accurate novel, "For Sceptre and Crown" (*Um Scepter und Krone*), of which an excellent English translation appeared in 1875: "Monsieur Benedetti presented a remarkable contrast to the powerful form and firm, soldier-like bearing of the Prussian Minister. He was somewhat past fifty, his thin hair had receded from his forehead, and only sparingly covered the upper part of his head. His smooth, beardless face was one of those physiognomies whose age it is difficult to discover, as when young they look older, when old, younger than they really are. It would have been difficult to say what characteristic, what individuality, such features could express; nothing was seen beyond a calm expression of receptive and intelligent sensibility to every impression; what lay behind this gentle, courteous exterior, it was impossible to discover. His eyes were bright and candid, apparently careless and indifferent; it was only by the rapid and keen glance with which he occasionally took in every circumstance around him, that he betrayed the lively interest that really actuated him. His face told nothing, expressed nothing, and yet one perceived involuntarily that behind this nothing lay something, carefully concealed. He was of middle height, and the bearing of his slender figure was elegant, in his movements he was as animated as an Italian, as pliant and elastic as an Oriental; his light summer clothes were extremely simple, but notwithstanding the journey from which he had just returned, they were of spotless freshness."

the motley web of diplomacy now being woven—and back he came post-haste to the camp-court of King William, which, ever nearing Vienna, was now established in the romantic old castle of Nicolsburg, where Napoleon I. had also resided after the battle of Austerlitz. Back came breathless M. Benedetti (19th July) with the triumphant news that, with infinite pains, he had prevailed on Francis Joseph to accept the suggestions of Napoleon as the basis of negotiations. And was not this first success of the Napoleonic mediation calculated to fill the mind of Bismarck with moderation and gratitude? On the contrary, artless M. Benedetti was shocked to find that the Prussian Minister-President only hem'd and hah'd, and wondered why the French Emperor could have shown such a stingy spirit in seeking to curtail a conqueror of his natural rights; for had not King William vowed that, "after making such sacrifices as he had done, he would rather abdicate than return home without a considerable addition of territory"?* But of any territorial addition to Prussia, on the basis of peace proposals of Napoleon, there was not one single word.

Bismarck was perfectly frank with his astute French friend. While declaring that the King was willing to accept the Napoleonic proposal as the basis of a five days' truce, he avowed

Bismarck diplomatises with the French Ambassador.

* Despatch of Bismarck to Prussian Ambassador in Paris, of 20th July, captured by Austrians and first published in 1869 in their Official History of the War. The divulgence of this document formed the subject of remonstrance on the part of the Pru-sian Government.

that the main condition of a definitive peace could only be the cession to Prussia of Hanover, Saxony, and Hesse, which had hitherto, like wedges driven into the stem of an oak, impeded her natural growth and split her into sprawling, disconnected fragments. These States had been fairly warned before the outbreak of hostilities, but had nevertheless taken up arms against Prussia; and now the necessities of her own position, no less than the national needs of Germany, compelled her to assert the priority of her rights as a conqueror over the pleadings of sentimental humanitarians for the piteous fate of the fallen, and for the principle of legitimate and old-established monarchy.

M. Benedetti affected to believe that, in making such "monstrous demands," Bismarck was not in earnest, and reminded him that Europe was no longer living in the time of Frederick the Great, who (like Rob Roy) kept whatever he took.* Bismarck returned that no State would seriously oppose the designs of Prussia. "What about England, and her old dynastic ties with Hanover?" asked M. Benedetti. Bismarck, who remembered what England had done for Denmark, only shrugged his shoulders. "And Russia?" inquired the French Ambassador. Bismarck knew that General Manteuffel was about to proceed to St. Petersburg with assurances which would defeat all opposition in that quarter; assurances that opened up to Russia the hopeful prospect of her soon being able to take advantage of France's difficulties and shake herself free of the Black Sea Treaty—for

* Despatch of M. Benedetti of 15th July.

which, under Prince Gortchakoff, she was so patiently yet resolutely "gathering herself."* "And France?" continued M. Benedetti, with the self-satisfied look of a man who thinks he has at last delivered a poser. "Well, what of France?" rejoined Bismarck. "The Emperor will surely never dispute our right to annex the countries above-mentioned." "Well, perhaps not," responded Monsieur Benedetti with a whisper, and a furtive look round to see that no one was listening, "on condition of your giving us due compensation; on condition of your giving us Mayence, and restoring us the Rhine-frontier of 1814."† "Well done, magnanimous and disinterested mediator!" thought Bismarck, who now cast about to hoist the Imperial plotter with his own petard. Mastering his boiling rage at the incredible impudence of such a demand, he merely replied that the question of "compensation" to France could best be settled after the conclusion of peace with Austria, which was meanwhile the most pressing matter in hand; and Monsieur Benedetti, agreeing, was thus converted to a course that was to bring home to him and his master the bitter truth of the maxim, that it is bootless to shut the stable-door after the steed is stolen.

* "*La Russie ne boude pas, elle se recueille.*" Her renunciation of the Black Sea Treaty in 1870, which was not objected to by Prussia, was intimately connected with Manteuffel's mission to St. Petersburg in 1866; but of this more anon.

† *Vide post, p.* 404. "*A la vérité, pendant que je me trouvais encore à Nikolsburg, et au moment où les plénipotentiaires de deux puissances belligérantes touchaient au terme de leurs négociations, je fus informé que le gouvernement de l'Empereur avait décidé de demander à la Prusse à titre de compensation, le redressement de notre frontière de l'Est.*"—"Ma Mission en Prusse," p. 177.

Peace Preliminaries of Nicolsburg.

Within a week after this interview, Bismarck, who always had a strong liking for the logic of *faits accomplis*, sent for the French Ambassador and told him, to his no small consternation, that by the Preliminaries of Peace of Nicolsburg (26th July) which had just been signed, Austria, among other things, agreed to a Prussian annexation of Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel and Nassau, and the Free City of Frankfort. But what had Monsieur Benedetti been about, that all this was done without his direct cognisance and approval? Had, then, the representative of the *grande nation* not been admitted to the peace conferences? No, indeed; he had to remain out in the cold, and pick up such scanty crumbs of information as were freely flung him, or as he could gather from beneath the sumptuous table of babbling Rumour, while Bismarck sat closeted with Count Karolyi and Baron Brenner, and re-fashioned the map of Germany according to his iron will and pleasure.*

* The conference between Bismarck and the Austrian plenipotentiaries, which led to the signature of the peace preliminaries, began on the 22nd July, after King William had accepted Napoleon's proposal as the basis of a five days' truce – a truce which arrested the victorious progress of the Prussians at Blumenau, near Pressburg, just as this city, the key of Hungary, was within their masterful grasp. *A propos* of this incident, the following anecdote may be given from Dr. Busch (*Neue Tagebuchsblätter*): "We were discussing the Bohemian campaign, when the Prince related the following characteristic episode: 'At the council of war held in my room at Nicolsburg, my colleagues wished to carry the campaign into Hungary. I was, however, opposed to it; the cholera, the Hungarian steppes, political considerations, and many other matters presented, as I thought, obstacles to be well weighed. They persisted, however, in their opinion, and in vain I repeated my protest against the enterprise. I then went into my chamber, which was separated from the room by a wooden

And yet not wholly so, for he was finally moved from his firm resolve to annex the Kingdom of Saxony, whose stubborn and intriguing opposition (under its Prime Minister, Herr von Beust) to his reform schemes had been one of the main causes of the war. But on the subject of Saxony, which had bled so freely for him on the field of Königgrätz, Francis Joseph was, or pretended to be, quite inexorable; and his protestations were supported by the Emperor of the French, who had been personally implored by Beust to stand up for the King of Saxony in his hour of stress, as the King of Saxony, alone of all the German Princes, had stood by the Great Napoleon after his collapse at Leipzig—a prayer with which Napoleon the Little was all the more willing to comply, as, under the mask of magnanimity, he would thus be able to thwart the ambitious and disquieting schemes of successful Prussia. As a matter of fact, Saxony was less essential to the territorial perfection of Prussia than Hanover and Hesse; and Bismarck wisely deemed it not worth the while to provoke a renewal of the conflict for the sake of this kingdom, provided its accession to the new Confederation of the North were secured. Rather, however, than yield on the latter point, he threatened to break off the peace negotiations; and thus a compromise was effected which saved the sovereign integrity of Saxony, but yet defeated her desire of throwing in

Saxony spared.

partition only, locked my door, threw myself upon the bed, and wept aloud from nervous excitement. After a short time they were quiet, and the idea was given up.'"

her fate with the States of the South under—in all probability—a French protectorate.

But without Saxony, Prussia had every reason to be satisfied with the other territories she had acquired—territories which added four and a half millions to her population, and increased her area by about a fourth of its previous extent. There is, indeed, reason to believe that King William was also bent on annexing part of Bohemia, and that he was only turned from his determination by the urgent representations of Bismarck, who, true to his "ungrateful task of pouring water into the foaming wine," rightly argued that such an act would leave a thorn in the heart of the Austrians that must needs one day blossom out into a luxuriant plant of revenge. Well appreciating the wisdom of treating vanquished Austria with moderation, and even magnanimity, Bismarck was content with her entire exclusion from the German family of States, being minded to keep open the door of future reconciliation by exacting no greater material indemnity for war-expenses than payment of forty million thalers.*

Prussia's gains.

In spite of the fact, too, that all the South German States, with the exception of Baden, invoked the intervention of Napoleon in favour of lighter conditions of peace, they had every reason to be satisfied with the penalties imposed upon

Punishment of the Southern States.

* Reduced by a half, in recognition of certain counter-claims of Austria in connection with Schleswig-Holstein, &c. Saxony also had to pay ten million thalers.

them. Bavaria and Hesse were let off with the payment of thirty and three million guldens respectively, and the cession of some few straggling patches of territory for the better rectification of the Prussian frontier; while Würtemberg and Baden were mulcted in the several sums of eight and six million guldens. The offence of the Southern States being exactly the same as that of their Northern allies, who had to expiate their sins by their very existence, it may seem strange that the former were treated with such comparative mercy. The peace preliminaries had secured to them—mainly at the instance of Napoleon—"international and independent existence;" but how had Bismarck been induced to let them enter on this advantageous kind of national life on such easy terms? A dramatic incident will soon explain.

A dramatic incident.

Bismarck had left Berlin on the 30th of June, and on the 4th of August he returned with the King after an absence of little more than a month, with the draft of the Treaty of Prague,* embodying the results of the war already referred to, in his pocket. Sitting in his cabinet two days after his arrival home, pondering proudly on the undreamt-of issue of the campaign and the jubilant acclamations which had greeted his return,† he is aroused from his reverie by a

* The Treaty of Prague, which will be found in the Appendix, was not, indeed, *signed* till the 23rd of August, about the same time as the Treaties with the South German States; but the basis of all these instruments had been *agreed upon* before Bismarck returned to Berlin, and so, for the sake of artistic unity, we have anticipated the *historical fact*.

† It was a moving spectacle (the return to Berlin of the King and his paladins), wrote the *Times* Correspondent. "The illuminations

knock at the door, and enter the Genius of Compensation in the shape of bland Monsieur Benedetti with the draft of a treaty in his hand.

"*Ah, bon jour, votre Excellence;* how can I serve you?"

"Well, to be brief, by restoring to France her Rhine frontier of 1814."*

shed floods of light, the cannon roared, and the strains of the national anthem rose gloriously over the thousands of privileged spectators pressing round the official circle. In another moment Count Bismarck, in the uniform of a Major in the Landwehr Cuirassiers, left the royal carriage. Jubilant hurrahs received the able and courageous Minister, who, with friends thronging forward to shake hands, and wife and children claiming his first attention, found himself immediately surrounded by a dense crowd of eager and sincere well-wishers."

* "It is well known that on the 6th of August, 1866, it came to this, that I was treated to a visit from the French ambassador, who, in brief language, delivered the ultimatum—cede Mayence to France, or expect an immediate declaration of war. Of course I did not hesitate one second with my answer, and it was, 'Very well, then, let there be war!' With this reply he went back to Paris, where they thought over the matter and gave me to understand that his (Benedetti's) first instructions were extorted from the Emperor during his illness."—*Speech of Bismarck in the Reichstag, 2nd May*, 1871. In revealing this fact to the Powers in a Note of August 10th, 1870 (part of the celebrated and sensational Benedetti revelations), Herr von Thile wrote, "on behalf of Bismarck": "In the archives of the Foreign Office at Berlin is preserved a letter from Count Benedetti to me, dated August 5th, 1866, and a draft Treaty enclosed in that letter. Copies of both are appended to the present communication. The originals, in Count Benedetti's handwriting, I shall submit to the inspection of the representatives of the neutral Powers, and I will also send you a photographic facsimile of the same." Here, for curiosity's sake, is the text of both the letter and draft Treaty. The letter:—

Particulière.

Mon cher Président!

En réponse aux communications que j'ai transmises de Nikolsbourg à Paris à la suite de notre entretien du 26 du mois dernier, je reçois de Vichy" (where the Emperor was staying) "le projet de convention secrète que vous trouverez ci-joint en copie. Je m'empresse de vous en donner connaissance afin que vous puissiez l'examiner à votre loisir. Je suis du

"What? Your Excellency must be mad!"

"No, indeed; 'my pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time, and makes as healthful music.' The dynasty of my master were in danger, if public opinion in France is not appeased by some such concession from Germany."

"Tell your Imperial master that a war (against us) in certain eventualities would be a war with revolutionary means, and that, amid revolutionary dangers, the German dynasty would be sure to fare much better than that of the Emperor Napoleon."*

"No prevarication—Mayence, or an immediate declaration of war."

"Very well, then, let there be war," said Bismarck, who knew that the Southern States had already agreed

reste à votre disposition pour en conférer avec vous quand vous en jugerez le moment venu.

Tout à vous

Dimanche 5 Août 1866. (signé) Benedetti.

The Treaty:—

Article I.

L'Empire français rentre en possession des portions de territoire qui, appartenant aujourd'hui à la Prusse, avaient été comprises dans la délimitation de la France en 1814.

Article II.

La Prusse s'engage à obtenir du Roi de Bavière et du Grand Duc de Hesse, sauf à fournir à ces Princes des dédommagements, la cession des portions de territoire qu'ils possèdent sur la rive gauche du Rhin et à en transférer la possession à la France.

Article III.

Sont annulées toutes les dispositions rattachant à la Confédération germanique les territoires placés sous la souveraineté du Roi des Pays Bas, ainsi que celles relatives au droit de garnison dans la forteresse de Luxembourg.

* Prussian "Official Gazette."

to sign secret Treaties* conferring the command of their several armies on the King of Prussia, in the event of a national struggle.

And *this*, then, was the consideration which had induced Bismarck to let off the States of the South on such easy terms. At Nicolsburg, he had put off French claims of compensation until after the conclusion of peace with Austria, and now he had devised means of defying them altogether. Now it was that Monsieur Benedetti bitterly experienced how bootless it is to shut the stable-door after the steed is stolen. He and his master had been completely duped.

"Very well, then, let there be war"—that was the response to his ultimatum of "Mayence, or . . . ," with which Monsieur Benedetti had to hurry back to Paris, where a glimmering consciousness of the situation had already broken in upon the flatulent mind of Napoleon. "Are we prepared to fight *all* Germany?" asked the Emperor of his Marshals. "Not at all," replied his Marshals, "until our whole army, like that of Prussia, is supplied with a breechloader, until our drill is modified to suit the new weapon, until our fortresses are in a perfect state of preparedness, and until we create a mobile and efficient national reserve." "Very well, then," responded Napoleon,

Napoleon reviews the situation, and changes front.

* These Treaties were signed on the 22nd of August, on the *very day before* the signature of the Treaty of Prague, which secured to the Southern States "an international and independent existence;" but the fact was kept secret till the following year, when it was divulged as a damper on the bellicose ambition of Napoleon, who had begun to cast about for another cause of quarrel with Prussia. See further on, when we come to speak of Luxemburg, p. 429 *et passim*.

sadly and dejectedly, "let all these things be done as fast as possible; and meanwhile we must justify and explain our necessary change of front by sacrificing you, M. Drouyn de Lhuys, our trusty and well-belovéd Minister of Foreign Affairs, who have acted indiscreetly in making such proposals to Prussia. France's real interest does not consist in receiving an insignificant addition of territory, but in helping Germany to constitute herself in the manner most conducive to our interests and those of Europe;"* or in other words, "it is true we wish to put our hand in your pocket, but only to mend a hole in it, and not to steal your money." It was precisely as if a highway robber, presenting an old and empty horse-pistol at the head of a traveller, had demanded his money or his life; and, on finding that his victim drew from his pocket, not a purse, but a six-chambered revolver of the most approved modern type, had turned pale and taken to his heels, hissing out curses of disappointment and vows of another day. And alas for the highway robber, and alas for his nation, that he clung so desperately to his vows!

A Bill of Indemnity.

Meanwhile Prussia proceeded with all energy to set her newly acquired house in order, and heeded not the midnight thief who prowled around it, seeking means of burglarious entry but finding

* Letter of the Emperor to M. de la Valette of 12th August. M. Drouyn de Lhuys finally retired from office on the 2nd September, in consequence of the failure of his "compensation policy," and—remarkable coincidence!—Louis Napoleon *also* retired from office in a very much more violent manner, on the same day four years afterwards, and for precisely the same reason!

none. From the hardships of the tented field and the labours of treaty-making, Bismarck now again passed to the arena of parliamentary fight. Writing to his wife from Prague (3rd August) on his way home, he said:—

"To-morrow we expect to be in Berlin. Great contention about the Speech from the Throne. The good people have not enough to do, and see nothing but their own noses, and exercise their swimming powers on the stormy waves of phrase. Our foes we can manage, but our friends! Almost all of them wear blinkers, and see only one spot of the world."

"Passed to the arena of parliamentary fight," did we say? No; rather of parliamentary victory. For the battle of Königgrätz, in addition to ending the long-standing quarrel between Prussia and Austria, had also closed the bitter conflict which had for the last four years divided the King of Prussia from his people. The elections had been held—not, perhaps, without design—in the earlier stage of the Bohemian campaign, and, under the influence of the telegrams announcing the victorious progress of the national arms, the country returned a Chamber in which the moderate Liberal element predominated over the Progressists, or party of pure negation. On the day after his return to the capital, the new Diet was ceremoniously opened by the King,* who begged to be now formally acquitted of

* "The Speech from the Throne did not disappoint the expectations raised by the promising state of politics. The King, who entered with the Crown Prince and other Princes of the House, received the pregnant manuscript from the hands of his Premier, and read it aloud with a firm and sonorous voice. His Majesty began by thanking God for the victory accorded to his arms. He hoped that the results of the campaign would

having ruled so long without a budget. Eager to seize the hand of peace thus extended to it, yet covering its eagerness with a decent veil of professorial doctrine, the grateful Chamber not only passed a Bill of Indemnity on all irregular acts of the Government during the Conflict-Time,* but also, as a special proof of its confidence, and a special admission of its own past errors of judgment, complied with the demand for a credit of sixty million thalers (the war had cost eighty-eight) to defend, if need be, what had already been won; for Bismarck confessed that the aims of his foreign policy were still far from attained.

redound to the permanent benefit of the country, and pave the way for the attainment of the national objects of Germany. Then passing on to domestic affairs, he briefly commented on the constitutional controversy that had been going on before the war, and accounting for the irregular military expenditure by a reference to the necessities of the time, asked for a Bill of Indemnity. His Majesty's words—sober and unpretending as ever—were received with loud applause. As the royal speech, so was the attitude of the House: business-like, and without the slightest tinge of an elation which might have been pardonable in the first flush of a brilliant success."—The *Times* Correspondent.

* In the Lower Chamber this Bill was carried by 230 against 75 votes, while in the Upper House it was passed unanimously. "We wish for peace," said Bismarck, "because the Fatherland is at this moment more in want of it than before, and because we hope that we shall now find it. We should have asked for it sooner, had we thought we should find it. We trust we shall now find it because you will have seen that the Government is not so indifferent to the task which the greater portion of you also have at heart, not so indifferent as perhaps you thought some years ago, not so indifferent as the silence of the Government about much that had to be kept silent might have warranted you to believe. But our task is not yet complete; demanding as it does the unity of the entire nation both in deed, and for the impression we must thus make abroad. It has often been said that the pen has forfeited what the sword has won; but I am thoroughly confident we shall not hear that what sword and pen have together won, has been annihilated from this tribune."—*Speech on 1st September.*

For the rest, the most important work of the session was the passing of a law annexing Hanover, Electoral Hesse, Nassau, and the city of Frankfort; and on the day of its promulgation—20th September—representative bodies of the victorious Prussian army made their triumphal entry into Berlin. The King, who headed his home-returning heroes, was preceded by his three mightiest men of valour—Moltke, Roon, and Bismarck—the last now raised to the rank of a Major-General; and as the brilliant cavalcade proceeded down the Linden through a flower-strewn lane of more than two hundred captured Austrian guns, and past the spot where, but a few weeks before, an attempt had been made to take his life: the soldier-statesman, with the pale and overworked but high and haughty look, most conspicuous on his prancing charger amid his companion-conquerors, must have been made to ponder sadly, yet proudly, on his employment as the instrument of his country's fate—made to do so by the showers of laurel-wreaths, the sky-cleaving cheers, the clangorous acclaim of bells, and the saluting thunder of cannon, all blended into the frenzied pæan of a victorious people.*

Triumphal entry into Berlin.

* Bismarck's appearance on that day is thus described by the correspondent of an English newspaper (quoted in Mr. Edward Dicey's "Battlefields of 1866"): "But for my part I own I could spare but little attention for the King himself. A few yards further on there stood a group of horsemen. One was General von Roon, the Minister of War; another was General Moltke, the soldier to whom more than any single person the conduct and conception of the campaign are due. On the extreme right, in the white uniform of a major" (should be major-general) "of Landwehr Cuirassiers, a broad-shouldered, short-necked man sat mounted on a brown bay mare. Very still and silent the rider sits, waiting patiently until the inter-

But their victory had well-nigh cost them dear, for it had shaken the Herculean frame of the man to whom it was mostly due; and no sooner had he, against the advice of his doctor, figured in the triumphal pageant which closed the second act of the great national drama, than away he hurried to the country in search of rest and health. Among the oaken groves of the island of Rügen, fanned by bracing breezes from the Baltic, he strove to forget the public cares which had crushed him down; and his convalescence was hastened by the flattering news that his grateful countrymen had assigned to him the first share of the sum of one and a half million thalers voted for distri-

Palmam qui meruit ferat!

view between the King and the civic authorities is concluded. The skin of his face is parchment-coloured, with dull leaden-hued blotches about the cheeks; the eyes are bloodless; the veins about the forehead are swollen; the great heavy helmet presses upon the wrinkled brows; the man looks as if he had risen from a sick-bed which he never ought to have left. That is Count Bismarck-Schönhausen, Prime Minister of Prussia. Yesterday he was said to be well-nigh dying; ugly rumours floated about the town; his doctors declared that rest, absolute rest, was the only remedy upon which they could base their hopes of his recovery. But to-day it was important that the Premier should show himself. The iron will, which had never swerved before any obstacle, was not to be daunted by physical pain, or to be swayed by medical remonstrances. And so, to the astonishment of all those who knew how critical his state of health had been but a few hours before, Count Bismarck put on his uniform and rode out to-day to take his place in the royal *cortége*. Even now the man who has made a united Germany a possibility, and has raised Prussia from the position of a second-rate Power to the highest rank among continental empires, is but scantly honoured in his own country; and the cheers with which he was greeted were tame compared with those which welcomed the generals who had been the instruments of the work his brain had planned. But to those, I think, who looked at all beyond the excitement of the day, the true hero of that brilliant gathering was neither King nor princes of the blood royal, generals nor soldiers, but the sallow, livid-looking statesman, who was there in spite of racking pain and doctors' advice and the commonest caution, in order that his work might be completed to the end."

bution among the chief actors in the war; * assigned to him the first share for those splendid services which had opened up to his country's arms a swifter and more dazzling career of glory than had ever graced the reign of Frederick the Great; which had increased the area and population of his country by a fourth of their previous extent; which had made Prussia undisputed arbitress of the fate of Germany; and which had all but realised the dreams of perfect national unity for which his distracted countrymen had greatly suffered and vainly bled.

We will conclude this chapter with the words which Thomas Carlyle wrote to a friend on the very day (23rd August), though yet unknown to him, when the Peace of Prague was signed:—

"That Germany is to stand on her feet henceforth, and not be dismembered on the highway; but face all manner of Napoleons and hungry, sponging dogs, with clear steel in her hand, and an honest purpose in her heart—this seems to me the best news we or Europe have heard for the last forty years or more. May the Heavens prosper it! Many thanks also for Bismarck's photograph; he has a royal enough physiognomy, and I more and more believe him to be a highly considerable man; perhaps the nearest approach to a Cromwell that is well possible in these poor times."

* The other recipients of this public bounty—which was taken out of the war-indemnity fund—were Generals Roon, Moltke, Herwarth von Bittenfeld, Von Steinmetz, and Vogel von Falckenstein. The original draft of this Dotation Bill only made mention of the Prussian "army-leaders" as its objects; but at the instance of the committee, to which it was referred, the name of Count Bismarck was inserted as the chief and most meritorious beneficiary. Bismarck received 400,000 thalers (£60,000); General Roon, the War Minister, 300,000 thalers; and Generals Moltke, Steinmetz, Vogel von Falckenstein, and Herwarth von Bittenfeld each 200,000 thalers.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NORTH GERMAN CONFEDERATION.

Our last chapter ended with the triumphal entry of the Prussian troops into Berlin after the Bohemian campaign, and this one must begin with another striking pageant—the opening of the first North German Parliament (24th February, 1867), in the throne-room of the royal palace.* About three hundred deputies—chosen

The First North German Parliament.

* "The walls of the time-honoured apartment looked down upon a gathering such as had never before been witnessed there. There met men from the Russian frontier, where winter lasts seven months, with the more fortunate sons of the Rhine, whose climate has little experience of northern rigours. The Schleswiger, a genuine descendant of the Saxon, preferring to this day the homely idiom of his race to the literary language of the common Fatherland, shook hands with the Frank from Coburg, whose ancestors, under Charlemagne, combated and converted to Christianity the tribes of the German North. The Thuringian and Hessian from the central parts of the country, after long years of separation, associated again with the Pomeranian from the Baltic, and the Frisian, the Anglo-Saxon brother of the Englishman, from the North Sea. With the exception of two, the various branches of the German national family were all represented in the Hall; and, though the absence of the missing ones was noticed and commented upon with regret, the hope of soon comprehending the Bavarians and Suabians in the goodly company beat strong in many a loyal heart. . . . . When everything was ready, Count Bismarck, in his white cavalry uniform, repaired to the royal apartment to inform the King that the first Parliament of the North German Confederacy was awaiting the royal presence. Then the royal train came into view, more solemn, more numerous, and more richly attired than any that has ever graced a similar display in Prussia."—*Times* Correspondent.

for three years—had been returned to this Constituent Assembly from the various allied States, by universal suffrage—a principle which had figured in the Frankfort Constitution (of 1848), as well as in the counter-schemes of Federal reform wherewith Bismarck had met the plans of Austria in 1863, and than which, with all its defects, he himself avowed he knew no better electoral law. Representatives of the allied Governments had meanwhile drawn up a Federal Charter, which had been framed, Bismarck declared, not with the view of attaining a theoretical ideal, but with the simple aim of meeting the present practical wants of the nation, and of avoiding the errors into which the Constitution-makers of Frankfort and Erfurt had fallen.

The Federal Constitution.

According to this Constitution, the twenty-two States north of the Main formed themselves into a "perpetual league for the protection of the Union and its institutions, as well as for the care of the welfare of the German people." * Legislative power was to be vested in two bodies—the Reichstag, representing the people, and the Bundesrath, composed of delegates from the allied Governments —the perpetual presidency of the latter body being vested in the King of Prussia. So far, this was a Legislature of the bi-cameral kind; but the Bundesrath,

* The Confederated States were: Prussia, Saxony, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Oldenburg, Brunswick, Saxe-Weimar, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Saxe-Meiningen, Anhalt, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Saxe-Altenburg, Waldeck, Lippe-Detmold, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, Reuss-Schleiz, Reuss-Greiz, Schaumburg-Lippe, Lippe, and the free cities Hamburg, Lübeck, and Bremen.

or Federal Council, also comprised the functions of what, in England, would be those of the House of Lords and of the Crown; and in its name all executive power was vested in the King of Prussia, who, acting under its authority, was to have the supreme command of the army, declare war and peace, appoint ambassadors, and conduct negotiations with foreign Powers. The cost of administration was to be contributed by the various States in proportion to their population, on whom was likewise placed the additional burden of universal liability to military service—all the Federal forces being reorganised on the Prussian model, and the strength of the standing army (on a peace footing) fixed at one per cent. of all the inhabitants.*

While foreign affairs, and all other matters of common interest, naturally fell within the exclusive competency of the new Federal Diet and Government, full legislative and administrative liberty was left to the individual States — as is the case, for example, in the North American Union — which were thus accorded the privilege of home-rule; and though Bismarck feared that the old war-cries of "Hi, Guelph," "Hi, Ghibeline," which once divided the Empire, would now be succeeded by a "parliamentary particularism" — whereof "Hi, Landtag," "Hi, Reichstag" would be the watchwords — the powers of autonomy thus granted to the various members of the Confederation proved, on the whole, a

Home-rule in Germany.

* From this it followed that, though all men capable of bearing arms were bound to serve, some were not necessarily called out.

real blessing to the nation. The passing of a law requiring a majority in both bodies, it followed that considerable power, though chiefly of a negative and consultative kind, had thus been accorded to the German people as the result and reward of their services and sacrifices in the national cause; but the balance of legislative authority still lay with the Federal Council, and more than a third of the authority of this body itself was in the hands of the King of Prussia.

Parliamentary parties.

Such, then, were the main general features of the Federal Constitution, of which the discussion formed the sole task of the first North German Parliament, or Reichstag. The party complexion of this body was very different from that of the Prussian Chamber which had waged four long years of bitter conflict with the Crown. The members of the Federal Assembly, it is true, were divided into no fewer than ten various fractions,* each hugging its own particular dogma with the well-known preference of a mother for a frail and deformed child; and thus it might have gone hard with the Government but for the fact that the balance of parliamentary power was now in the hands of a party to which the battle of Königgrätz had given birth.

This was the party of the National Liberals, of which the chief founders were two men destined to play a

* Conservatives, 59; Free Conservatives, 40; Centre, 27; Federal Constitutionalists, 18; National Liberals, 79; Free Unionists, 18; Radical Left (or Progressists), 19; Poles, 13; Danes, 2; 'Savages' or Independents, 25—total, 297, which, of course, included deputies from the provinces annexed by Prussia.

prominent part in the parliamentary history of their country—Herr von Bennigsen, a country squire of sense and substance from the annexed province of Hanover; and Dr. Edward Lasker, a lisping little Jewish lawyer from Posen, who had lived for several years in London, and returned with his clever head crammed full of modern instances from the constitutional history of England. In the Prussian Chamber, the latter had sat among the Radicals; but the events of 1866 had convinced him and others of his party that the best justification of a policy is its success—better even than a bill of indemnity—and that the duty of true patriots was to support the national policy of Bismarck. This, indeed, had long been urged by the Hanoverian Herr von Bennigsen, founder (1859) and president of that National Union which had become the rallying point for all those who, in 1849, had been disappointed in their hopes of seeing Prussia place herself at the head of a free and united Germany. The Progressists, it is true, were not averse from seeing Germany become united, but they held that the easiest way of doing this was first to make her free; while the National Liberals deemed it safer and wiser to subordinate the development of her internal institutions to the accomplishment of her national aims. Such, then, was the patriotic party—numerically greater than any other single fraction—which now, joining their forces with the Conservatives, rallied round Bismarck's banner, and helped to bear it on from one parliamentary victory to another for the next ten years, until doctrine

The National Liberals and the Progressists; Bennigsen and Lasker.

and defection at last thinned and disorganised their ranks.

To the National Liberals it was mainly due that the Federal Charter was accepted by the Constituent Reichstag. But it was not accepted without some material modifications, and a dangerous amount of that academic wrangling so dear to the Teutonic mind. "Show me two Germans," said the wise man, "and I will find you two opinions." The protests of the Poles and the Danes against amalgamation in a nation not their own were, of course, soon disposed of; but some other points were debated with an obstinacy which made Bismarck feel, he said, like Harry Hotspur when, "breathless and faint" after the battle, he was "pestered with a popinjay" of a hair-splitting and circumstantial lord.* To him it was incomprehensible that the parliamentary doctrinaires should raise such a dust about unessential matters, under the blinding clouds of which the nation might again lose its way and miss its goal. He had exhorted the Assembly to do its work quickly. "Only let us lift Germany into the saddle, so to speak," he said, "and she will ride of herself."† But the Liberals deemed the curb of the noble steed—hard as

Germany "in the saddle:" Bismarck and Harry Hotspur.

* Speech of 29th March. To describe his state of feeling at that moment, Bismarck referred his audience to Hotspur's speech in the beginning of "Henry IV.," quoting himself in English the first two lines:

> "But I remember when the fight was o'er,
> When I was dry with rage and extreme toil," etc.

† Speech of 11th March.

was its mouth—a little too strong, and suggested a looser rein. They succeeded, too, in slackening it.

Of thirty-six amendments introduced by them into the draft of the Federal Charter, Bismarck at last declared that all save two would be sanctioned by the allied Governments. But on the question of these two he was inexorable. He would on no account hear of deputies receiving daily pay, thus converting legislation into a lucrative profession attainable by "Catiline existences," and other chaotic and improper elements; nor would he extend the budget-rights of Parliament to the army, and thus expose the safety of the nation (he might also have added, the aims of his foreign policy) to the caprices of a fortuitous majority. Much against his will, he had consented to the eligibility of Government officials as deputies, to the exemption of veracious parliamentary reports from the law of libel, and to other important assertions of constitutional right; but, on the subject of the army, he vowed he would remain firm. And yet even on this point he had to effect a compromise; for, demanding a lump sum to maintain the peace-establishment at one per cent. of the population for ten years, he had in the long run to content himself with a period of only five.

Constitutional changes.

On the part of the Reichstag this was a very considerable relaxation of its hold upon the purse-strings of the State, and it was to its credit that this partial alienation of its rights resulted from the victory of its patriotism over its fine-spun constitutional principles.

The provisional Treaty of Federal Alliance had only been concluded till August, 1867; time was flying, and what was to happen if, before then, the Constitution were not approved by the Reichstag and sanctioned by each of the local Diets? Besides, a dark cloud was beginning to loom up on Germany's western frontier, threatening to burst in a deluge and disperse the flock before the national shepherd could bring it beneath the same protecting fold. It was no time to quarrel about constitutional trifles when the Gaul, in the humble garb of a beggar, but with the threatening eye of a robber, was beating at the gates. "Napoleon, unearthing his tomahawk, had forced the contending parties to renounce their favourite crotchets, relax the fists already doubled, and shake hands with open palm."* On the 17th April the Constitution of the North German Confederation, in the form already indicated, was carried, one may almost say rushed through, by a large majority.† Germany had at last been "lifted into the saddle," and Bismarck was appointed her riding-master, or Chancellor of the Confederation. "The time has now come," said King William, in closing the Constituent Reichstag, "when our German Fatherland is able to stand up for its peace, its rights, and its dignity with its united strength." This hint, or threat, was addressed to

The Gaul in the garb of a beggar, with the eye of a robber.

* *Times* Correspondent.

† The Constitution was subsequently approved by all the Parliaments of the Federal States by large majorities—in the Prussian Diet, *e.g.*, by 226 to 91; and in the Saxon Diet by 67 to 6.

France; but what in the world had France done to deserve it?

When deep in the discussion of its constitutional dogmas, the attention of the Reichstag was suddenly occupied with a question which showed the nation that it was by no means yet at liberty to settle down to the exclusive task of setting its house in order, "heedless of the midnight thief who prowled around it." For, alas! that masked and midnight thief, by persistent skulking and watching, had at last discovered an open window in the new but incomplete edifice of German unity. That window was the Duchy of Luxemburg; but what can avail a jemmy in the hands of a burglar clinging to a rope-ladder against a resolute householder vigilantly ensconced behind the window-curtain, and armed with a loaded revolver? Again, too, the weapon was silently levelled at the breast of the robber, just as he had laid his hand upon the window-sill, and again with effect. The revolver was drawn on the 18th March (1867), when the secret treaties of alliance—offensive and defensive—concluded the previous year between Prussia and the Southern States—were now published to an astonished Europe, especially to an astonished France; and it was cocked and presented on the 1st April, when Bismarck replied to a parliamentary question on the subject of Luxemburg. This interpellation was the outcome of a storm of wrath and excitement which shook the heart of the nation, on its being rumoured that Napoleon was stretching out

An Imperial burglar and his treatment.

his hand to seize this German Duchy.* And in this case rumour was right, as was proved by subsequent revelations which we must now work into our narrative.

Napoleon's policy of compensation.

How to secure for France advantages corresponding to the territorial gains of Prussia, continued to be Napoleon's all-absorbing thought. We saw how his demand for Mayence and the Rhine-frontier of 1814 was indignantly refused by Bismarck, but he soon returned to the attack. Within a fortnight of M. Benedetti's trip to Paris with the last emphatic word of the Prussian Premier as to the Rhine, he was back in Berlin with fresh proposals of compensation to France in the direction of Belgium. It was natural enough of M. de Bismarck, thought Napoleon, to decline parting with any of his native ground, but surely he would never object to the gratification of France's legitimate ambition at the expense of a foreigner. However niggardly with his own, there was at least no reason why he should not be generous with the goods of others. So argued the Imperial robber. Of that there is authentic and convincing evidence, and this consists of a Draft Treaty, in the handwriting of the French Ambassador, which openly expressed the desire of

* Says Mr. Blanchard Jerrold in his "Life of Napoleon"—in which, by the way, there are not more than four lines on the subject of Luxemburg!—"The Emperor's principle of nationalities as the basis of his foreign policy, albeit generous and just, and sincerely and courageously and obstinately maintained," etc.; and this of the *French* ruler who wanted to take *German* Luxemburg!

Napoleon to possess himself both of Belgium and of Luxemburg.

Great was the sensation when, on the 25th July, 1870, a few days after the declaration of war with France, this Predatory Treaty was revealed to an indignant Europe through the columns of *The Times*. In publishing this document Bismarck's aim, of course, was to prove the French Emperor to be still further in the wrong even than Europe believed him to be; but he might well have done this without stretching his case against him as he did.

Bismarck asserted that this shameful Draft Treaty was communicated to him in 1867, *after* a Conference of the Powers at London had settled the Luxemburg question on the basis of international law.* M. Benedetti, on the other hand, maintained,† and supported his contention by circumstantial evidence of a cogent kind, that the instrument belonged to the autumn of 1866; and, in the absence of all Prussian proof positive to the contrary, we are, in this particular case, inclined to credit the French version of the affair. But, after all, the date is of less importance than the fact; and the fact is certain. It was pretended by Mons. Benedetti that this treaty, which we deem of sufficient historical

The Benedetti Treaty.

* Bismarck's despatch to Count Bernstorff of 28th July, 1870.

† "Ma mission en Prusse," pp. 185-6. "*Monsieur de Bismarck prétend que cet incident s'est produit après le règlement de l'affaire du Luxembourg. Son intérêt à le reculer de près d'un an est visible; mais cette allegation ne resiste pas à un premier examen, et à un simple rapprochement de dates.*"

interest to give below,* was the suggestion of Bismarck, who, he said, offered Belgium and Luxemburg to France in return for the latter's aid in "crowning his work, and extending the domination of Prussia from the

* On July 25th, 1870, *The Times* published the following draft Treaty, proposed to Count Bismarck by Count Benedetti, the French Ambassador at Berlin :—

"His Majesty the King of Prussia and His Majesty the Emperor of the French, judging it useful to bind closer the ties of friendship which unite them, and so confirm the relations of good neighbourhood which happily exist between the two countries, and being besides convinced that to attain this result, which is, moreover, of a kind to insure the maintenance of the general peace, it is for their interest to come to an understanding on the questions concerning their future relations, have resolved to conclude a Treaty to the following effect, and have in consequence nominated as their representatives the following persons, viz. :

"His Majesty, &c.
"His Majesty, &c.

who, after exchanging their full powers, which have been found in good and due form, have agreed on the following articles :

"Art. I. His Majesty the Emperor of the French acquiesces in and recognises the gains made by Prussia in the course of the last war waged by her against Austria and that Power's allies.

"Art. II. His Majesty the King of Prussia engages to facilitate the acquisition by France of Luxemburg; and for this purpose His Majesty will enter into negotiations with His Majesty the King of the Netherlands, with the view of inducing him to cede his sovereign rights over the Duchy to the Emperor of the French, on the terms of such compensation as shall be judged adequate or otherwise. The Emperor of the French, on his side, engages to assume whatever pecuniary charges this arrangement may involve.

"Art. III. His Majesty the Emperor of the French shall raise no opposition to a Federal Union of the Confederation of North Germany with the States of South Germany, excepting Austria; and this Federal Union may be based on one common Parliament, due reservation, however, being made of the sovereignty of the said States.

"Art. IV. His Majesty the King of Prussia, on his side, in case His Majesty the Emperor of the French should be led by circumstances to cause his troops to enter Belgium or to conquer it, shall grant armed aid to France, and shall support her with all his forces, military and naval,

Baltic to the Alps." But, even if Bismarck had made such a proposal, it could only have been with the view of fooling his antagonist, knowing as *he* did, but as M. Benedetti as yet *did not*, that his work had already been virtually crowned by the secret military treaties with the Southern States.

"Bismarck was the author, though I was the writer," contended M. Benedetti,* with a bitter regret that he should ever have been so foolish as to fall into the trap prepared for him. In truth, the astute Frenchman was hoist with his own petard. No diplomatist had ever been more outrageously duped. No criminal had ever been more craftily induced to furnish his accusers with evidence of his guilt. The history of this scandalous Treaty is still involved in a certain mystery, but beyond the unsupported statement of M. Benedetti—and we will not deny its claim to fair consideration—there is

"Bismarck was the author, though I was the writer."

in the face of and against every Power which should, in this eventuality, declare war.

"Art. V. To insure the complete execution of the preceding conditions, His Majesty the King of Prussia and His Majesty the Emperor of the French contract, by the present Treaty, an alliance offensive and defensive, which they solemnly engage to maintain. Their Majesties bind themselves to observe its terms in all cases when their respective States, the integrity of which they reciprocally guarantee, may be threatened with attack; and they shall hold themselves bound, in any like conjuncture, to undertake without delay, and under no pretext to decline, whatever military arrangements may be enjoined by their common interest conformably to the terms and provisions above declared."

* "*Il était son œuvre, mais il était écrit de ma main, et j'aurais dû me montrer plus défiant. Je préfère cependant, je l'avoue encore, même a l'heure qu'il est, mon rôle à celui qu'il s'est donné dans ce triste incident. Tel sera, j'en ai la confiance, le verdict de l'opinion publique.*" —"Ma Mission en Prusse," p. 199.

nothing to show that the part played by Bismarck in the ugly business was anything more than that of a skilful *agent provocateur*. That he did indulge the credulous Frenchman with ambiguous talk about Belgium, seems indubitable; but it is equally certain that, towards the end of August, 1866, M. Benedetti received positive instructions from Paris which he hastened to redact into the draft Treaty that bears his name, and which prove that the initiative to the transaction came from the left side of the Rhine.* Bismarck, it is true, wished to keep on good terms with France; but the alliance of any other great Power suited him just as well, and the success of Manteuffel's mission to St. Petersburg had rendered him independent of the offers that came from Paris. But still, for purposes of his own, he affected to consider them, and M. Benedetti went to Karlsbad for a fortnight to allow Bismarck to make up his mind. But Bismarck had now got the draft of the Treaty of Theft secure under lock and key, and by the time the French Ambassador returned to Berlin, lo! the Prussian Premier had departed for the country. Thus the negotiations were meanwhile dropped: by Bismarck, because he had nothing more to gain from them; by Napoleon, who now perceived that he had been duped.

But, though duped, he was not discouraged; and if anything were wanted to prove that Napoleon, and not

* These instructions, forming part of the Benedetti revelations made at the outbreak of the great war, were published by the Prussian *Official Gazette*, and may be found at page 511, vol. I., of Hahn's "Bismarckiana." Their date alone, we think, is sufficient to determine the time of the Benedetti Treaty itself (August, 1866).

Bismarck, was the deviser of the proposed robbery, it would be the fact that, having failed to win over the latter as an accomplice of his meditated crime, the French Emperor now cast about to achieve part of its object in a more independent and less outrageous way. "Once at Luxemburg," wrote M. Benedetti, "we shall be on the road to Brussels."* But what on earth was their pretext for going to Luxemburg?

Luxemburg the road to Brussels.

The Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, though inhabited by a German race, was a personal fief of the King of Holland, in the same way as Schleswig-Holstein had appertained to the Crown of Denmark. In virtue of, and to the extent of, their feudal sovereignty over these territories, both Kings had been members of the Germanic Confederation; but the Danish war had cancelled the member-

The Luxemburg Question.

* *L'Affaire du Luxembourg, par M. Rothan*, p. 138. "Messrs. Calmann Levy have just published in an octavo volume the diplomatic souvenirs of M. G. Rothan, formerly Minister Plenipotentiary to Germany, under the title of *L'Affaire du Luxembourg, le Prélude de la Guerre*, 1870.' The work, which had already partly appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, contains additional documents, that greatly enhance its diplomatic and historical value. It is a stirring and accurate narrative of the political negotiations which were carried on between the battle of Sadowa and the declaration of war in 1870. These negotiations are treated in a masterly manner by one who was an active eye-witness, and after reading the book one can understand why M. Gambetta seriously thought of restoring M. Rothan to diplomatic life, and even of making him one of his coadjutors at the Foreign Office. Nothing could be more striking and interesting than this account, derived from personal observations and testimony. One is startled on reading the many symptoms with which the politicians of the Empire were warned without being awakened to their fatal mistake, and one cannot but sincerely admire the boldly conceived and boldly executed plans of the great diplomatic conqueror of France."—Paris Correspondent of *The Times*, March, 1882.

ship of one, and the Bohemian campaign that of the other. Yet there was this difference between the two cases. Losing all his proprietary rights over the Elbe Duchies, the King of Denmark was for ever excluded from the Germanic body of nations. But the war of 1866 had only restored to the King of Holland his independence as to Luxemburg, which was previously limited by the Federal Constitution of Germany, while leaving intact his sovereignty over the Grand Duchy. It was open to him, of course, to join the new Confederation of the North, as for Luxemburg. But not only did he decline to do this—and Bismarck thought it advisable in the circumstances not to force his will—but also demanded the withdrawal, from the German-speaking portion of his dominions, of the garrisons which Prussia had been hitherto entitled to keep there.

In this demand he was, of course, supported by France, who affected to see in the continued presence of King William's troops in a fortress overlooking her north-eastern frontier a standing menace to her security; and France, moreover, resolved to avert this alleged danger from herself by turning it against her German neighbour. In other words, Napoleon determined to get possession of Luxemburg by sleight or might. Having failed to achieve his object by foul means, he now set about compassing it by an appearance of fair. Getting only guarded and equivocal answers to his overtures at Berlin, which he nevertheless interpreted as a promise on the part of Prussia to recognise the *fait*

"Will you?" "Well, I will not say 'No!'"

accompli of the cession of the Grand Duchy, he addressed himself direct to the King of Holland.* Would the latter transfer to him his rights over Luxemburg for a money indemnity and a French guarantee of the integrity of his Dutch dominions, as against the possible designs of Germany? "Well," replied the King, "I will not say 'No.'"†

This was on the 19th March (1867), and, presto! on this very day the secret military treaties between Prussia and the Southern States were published at Berlin. This most startling revelation was a silent reply to a bellicose debate in the French Chamber in the course of which M. Thiers thundered, or rather screeched out a virtual —"thus far, and no farther with your German unity;" and great was the hubbub and excitement in the two countries.‡ What was the secret fury of Napoleon and his nation on finding that these military treaties, which for all practical purposes made Germany one, were concluded *on the day before* the signature of the Peace of

The Hague and Paris speak; Berlin acts.

* "*Les négociations avaient été, du côté de la France, poursuivies avec un tel mystère que le directeur politique du ministère des affaires étrangères, M. Desprez, n'en eu connaissance que par les interpellations de M. de Bennigsen. M. de Moustier*" (*the Foreign Minister*), "*pour en assurer le secret, chiffrait et déchiffrait lui-même les lettres et les dépêches qu'il échangeait avec Berlin et la Haye.*"—*Rothan.*

† Despatch of M. Baudin, French Envoy at the Hague, 19th March, 1867.—*Idem.*

‡ Debate on France's policy in the Corps Législatif from 14th to 18th March. "Of Herr von Bismarck," remarked M. Thiers, on this occasion, "it must be said, what Bossuet said of Cromwell, that 'a man has at last come to light.'" Or, quoting what the First Napoleon said of Goethe, he might have said: "*Voilà un homme.*"

Prague, whereof one clause expressly stipulated an "international and independent existence" to the States south of the Main! Duped again! The clause in question had been inserted at the almost imperious instance of Napoleon, and this was the way in which Bismarck had resented his arrogant interference with the affairs of Germany. "Ha, ha, perfidy!" "covenant-breaking!" "insulting to *la grande nation!*"—and the like resounded throughout all France; which was answered by a counterblast of ringing cheers for Bismarck in grateful and admiring Germany. All is fair in love and war; and so it is in diplomacy, thought Bismarck, at least in this particular case.

The King of Holland in a fix.

The publication of the military treaties had its effect at the Hague as well as at Paris. The King of Holland, who at first seemed inclined to entertain the barter-overtures of Napoleon, now took fright and drew back. He felt that he was between the hammer and the anvil, and that, instead of a French alliance guaranteeing the integrity of his dominions, it might only jeopardise them. He was quite willing, and even anxious, to part with Luxemburg to France; but he perceived that, in a war between France and Germany resulting from the transaction, he was sure to lose not only the single stake which he was minded to deposit in the great game of European politics, but all his other capital besides. He was in an unendurable state of perplexity, and therefore, though he had sworn secrecy to Napoleon, he resolved to make a clean breast of it at Berlin.

Very guarded in his tone King William replied, in effect, that though his fellow-Sovereign of Holland was free to do as he liked, he must bear the responsibility of his actions. Another period of paralysing doubt now ensued at the Hague, during which the French brought all their diplomatic artillery into play to batter down the indecision of the King. At last, too, they succeeded, and a triumphant shout arose from their beleaguering lines. On the 30th of March the Prince of Orange announced to the Emperor that the King consented to the cession of the Grand Duchy, while begging Napoleon to make his father's peace with Prussia. The Emperor was all graciousness, and wrote an effusive letter to the King. The written word of the two contracting parties had been exchanged, and nothing remained for them but to sign the treaty. This, too, was on the very point of being done (1st April), when, for a merely formal reason, the completion of the bargain was delayed till the morrow. Meanwhile something happened at Berlin which made the King of Holland once more change his mind; and the heavy-bottomed Dutch, who, after immense exertions, had at last been hoisted to the desired point by the diplomatic block-and-tackle of the French, flapped heavily down again as low as ever.*

Premature pæans of the French.

Meanwhile the German people had got wind of what was passing at the Hague. Bismarck, who was privy to the business, had taken care of *that;* and

* See the "Hoisting of the Dutch" in Carlyle's chapter i., Book xiii. of "Frederick the Great."

the nation began to growl and murmur as if with the ominous undertones of an approaching storm. "France take Luxemburg?" "A piece of the Great German Fatherland?" "Will France carry her arrogance, her cupidity, and her intolerable spirit of interference thus far?" "Has not the King of Prussia sworn that not a single village shall be separated from Germany?" Swiftly gathering, the storm at last burst, and its protesting thunder found expression in a speech of Herr von Bennigsen in the German Parliament.* Questioning Bismarck as to the truth of the rumours afloat with regard to Luxemburg, the chief of the National Liberals

A parliamentary storm in Germany.

* As illustrating the popular feeling which prevailed in Germany on the question of Luxemburg, it is worth while to quote the following from Herr Bennigsen's speech: "For a certain Power contiguous to our frontiers the temptation to interfere before our new institutions have been consolidated by time and practice is evidently too great. We want peace. But if France does not hesitate to insult us, the earlier we say that we are all for war the better. It would be sullying our honour were we to act otherwise; it would be an indelible stain on the national escutcheon, were we to submit to arrogance and cupidity combined. We must call upon Count Bismarck to prove that energy is the best policy under certain circumstances. We must expect that the King, whose promise that 'not a single village should be separated from Germany,' found a responsive echo in our hearts, will call the nation to arms, if the necessity arises. All party dissension will disappear in such a case, and the new Federal Constitution; which we are discussing here, be completed in a few days. We wish for nothing better than to live in peace and amity with all our neighbours, and more especially with France. France is large enough to be able to dispense with conquest; and, if she would but consider her real interests, would waive all idea of war. Industry, culture, and freedom bid her refrain from an enterprise which, if persisted in, will inflict innumerable evils upon either nation. Let France pause and consider her course before she acts. Germany seeks no war; but if France will not allow us to become a united country, we are ready to give her the most indubitable proof that the time of our domestic division is past, and that her attempts will be henceforth resisted by the whole nation." (*Tremendous cheering.*)

made an ardent appeal to the Government to maintain the integrity of the Fatherland even at the cost of a war with France, and his speech was received by all parties with tremendous cheering.

This was precisely what Bismarck wanted. There is even reason to believe that he prompted this explosion of national feeling. Indeed, his whole dealing with the Luxemburg question was that of a consummate diplomatic tactician—armed with equivocality, and mantled with a certain amount of mystery which the lapse of time has not altogether dispelled. One thing certain is that, when Napoleon first broached the cession of the Grand Duchy, Bismarck affected to be by no means so deaf to his overtures as he afterwards became. No one who reads the documents quoted in the French account of the transaction can have any doubt about that. What, then, can explain his change of front? The French theory is, that he himself was really inclined to purchase reconciliation with France—for the campaign of 1866 had most decidedly estranged the two nations—at the price of Luxemburg; but that he had to yield to the Court, the military party, and the country. Yet from the beginning Bismarck must have known—none better—that the feelings of his King and countrymen on this subject would be irresistible. Why, then, from the very first did he not invest himself with their full force, as proof armour against the proposals of the French? Was it because he half hoped he might thus lure them on to that ordeal of battle from which

What did it all mean?

all the nation now knew there was little chance of ultimate escape? * Germany was ready, and why wait till France was so too?† The Main was already bridged by military treaties. Why not bring about their operation, and thus precipitate complete political union between North and South? Napoleon was as firmly bent on compensating himself for the successes of Prussia, as Bismarck was fiercely resolved that Germany should not pay France for her unity, as Italy had done, with her own flesh and blood. And yet this mysterious transaction about Luxemburg? "To dislodge Prussia from a fortress which passes for a bulwark of Germany," replied Count Beust, when sounded by Napoleon as to the feeling of Austria, "is to enable M. de Bismarck to appeal to the passions of his countrymen, and rally all disaffected elements round his standard."

If this really was Bismarck's aim, and there is much to show that it was, he had completely achieved it. The nation had spoken out, and there was no mistaking its meaning. "The allied Governments," said Bismarck, in reply to the interpellation of Herr von Bennigsen, "hope and trust that no foreign Power will seek to prejudice the indubitable rights of German States and German races." This was followed by a declaration of the Prussian Minister at the Hague that, in view of the

Dogged cautiousness of the Dutch.

* "'Je sais ce qui s'est passé,' disait la reine (Victoria) au prince de la Tour d'Auvergne. 'M. de Bismarck, bien qu'il le nie aujourd'hui, vous a lui-même encouragés à reclamer le Luxemburg.'"—Rothan, p. 342.

† "'Aujourd'hui,' disait le General Moltke, 'nous avons pour nous cinquante chances, d'ici à un an, nous n'en aurons plus que vingt-cinq.'"—Idem. p. 297.

outburst of public opinion in Germany, his Government would be forced to consider the cession of Luxemburg to France as a *casus belli*.* There was no more to be said. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs now absolutely refused to sign the French treaty of cession and of alliance with France, and neither cajolery nor coercion could move him from his firm resolve.

Here, indeed, was a pretty pass for things to have come to! Napoleon felt terribly embittered ("ulcerated," says M. Rothan) by the conduct of the King of Prussia and his Premier, who had, in his opinion, forgotten the services he had done them, broken their engagements, and scorned his offer of alliance—and all for a paltry patch of land which would have put him right with his countrymen, and reconciled them to the events of 1866. What was he to do? How extricate himself from the alarming predicament into which he had been lured? Undergo the humiliation of tearing up the written promise of the King of Holland, or enforce its performance at the point of the sword? Alas! his sword was rusted to its sheath, and even if it could be drawn it would not cut. Mexico had absorbed the marrow of the French army, and the rest of it was still in a hopeless state of unpreparedness. With neither an army nor allies, how was France to fight Prussia? Fight united Germany? No, not yet. With the cutting pain of

Napoleon, like Macbeth, is irresolute.

* Rothan, p. 259. M. Rothan himself admits that whatever may have been the seductive promises of Bismarck to France, he was relieved from them by the *non possumus* of the people's will, as expressed in Parliament.

corrosive acid, the bitter truth forced itself on the mind of Napoleon that he must again eat his own words ; and equally deep was the disappointment of the military party in Germany that the Gallic shark would not, after all, snap at the bait thrown out to it. The Imperial robber had again to turn heel, but his ingenuity saved him from the appearance of headlong and disgraceful flight.

Cosmopolitan crowds were already flocking to the great Industrial Exhibition, to the Temple of Universal Concord erected on the Champ de Mars ; and did this enterprise in itself not prove that Napoleon was a man of peace, and not of war? If there was any doubt on this point, would it not be dispelled if the Emperor, instead of drawing the sword for Luxemburg, submitted his case to the Areopagus of Europe, and thus rendered homage to the superiority of moral over brute force? Napoleon had demanded Luxemburg, and Bismarck — at last—had replied with an emphatic "No." Having gone so far, and extorted a promise of "Yes" from the King of Holland, it would be humiliating in France to respect the simple interdict of Prussia; but might she not, without diminution of her honour, bow to the will of all Europe? Europe had had a say in determining the status of Luxemburg in 1839, and was it not, therefore, the proper tribunal to adjudicate upon its fate in 1867? Happy thought! If it had only occurred sooner, and saved its owner from the shame of making virtue a necessity!

But, like Iago, he is resourceful.

"We shall meanwhile drop the question of ceding the Grand Duchy, and confine ourselves to demanding its evacuation by its Prussian garrison." So said the French Ambassador in London to Lord Stanley, while begging the intercession of England in support of this course. The dissolution of the old Bund, it was argued, had quashed Prussia's military rights over Luxemburg; and she was not, therefore, entitled to remain in a fortress which gave her strategical advantages over France. Hearing of this reasoning, Bismarck at once sent word to London (15th April) that, "as things at present stood, Prussia could not consent to the separation of Luxemburg from Germany, under any form whatever, or to the evacuation of its stronghold."

The "Iron Count."

This was plain enough speaking on the part of the Iron Count, who, for the rest, "waited, and remained impenetrable and inaccessible to the diplomatic body." Was he, then, really bent on provoking France, and precipitating that conflict which he knew to be inevitable? Indeed, it almost seemed so. But he had not yet arrived at the summit of his arbitrary power, and he was at cross-purposes with several of those above and beneath him—notably Count von der Goltz, Ambassador at Paris, who, like the Harry Arnim of a later day, was at once the rival and thwarter of his Chief.* There was manifest confusion in the

Bismarck and Von der Goltz.

* Dr. Busch, the Chancellor's Press-Secretary during the French War, once ventured to ask his master what sort of a man Von der Goltz, of whom one heard such different opinions, had been—whether he was

councils of Berlin, and the chronicle of the negotiations and contradictions of those days fairly baffles the judgment of the historian.

On one and the same day the King expressed his firm trust in the maintenance of peace, and the Crown Prince his fear that war was inevitable. War, indeed, was already raging between the journals of Paris and Berlin, and all Europe was disquieted by apprehensions of an impending struggle.* In France, so firm was the conviction that the Prussian eagle was preparing to swoop across the Rhine, that General Ducrot closed the gates of Strasburg—under

War-signs.

really as clever and as considerable a man as people said. "Clever!" was the ready reply. "Yes, in a certain sense, a rapid worker, well informed, but changeable in his judgment of men and things: to-day for this man, or these plans; to-morrow for another man and quite opposite arrangements. Then he was always in love with the Queens to whose Courts he was accredited; first, with Amalia of Greece, then with Eugénie. He seemed to think that what I had had the good fortune to do, he with his larger intellect might have done still better. Therefore he was continually intriguing against me, although we had been acquaintances when young. He wrote letters to the King in which he complained of me, and warned him against me. This did him no good, for the King gave me the letters, and I answered them. But in this respect he was unchangeable, and continued writing letters, unexhausted and indefatigable. For the rest, he was not much liked by his subordinates. In fact they hated him. I remember when I went in 1862 to Paris, and called upon him, he had just gone to take a nap. I wished to leave him undisturbed, but the secretaries were obviously delighted that he would have to get up, and one of them went off at once to announce me to him so as to cause him annoyance. He might so easily have gained the respect and attachment of the people about him. Any man can do so as Ambassador. It was always a great object with me. But as Minister there is no time for that; there are so many other things to do and to think of, that I am obliged to manage at present in a more military fashion."

* "The anxiety caused by the constant dread of war has made emigration rise to an unprecedented pitch. The Germans are now leaving the old country at the rate of 225,000 a year."—*Times* Correspondent.

pretence of repairing the drawbridges—but in reality to guard against a surprise.* Loud and reproachful, on the other hand, were the protests of the Prussians against the warlike stir observable in all the camps and arsenals of France.

The Powers applied themselves to extinguish the gathering flames which threatened to burst out into an all-consuming conflagration. Every diplomatic doctor had his remedy—all of them more or less unacceptable by Prussia; but at last, Russia — on instigation from the proper quarter—proposed the submission of the quarrel to a Conference of the European Powers. To this proposal Bismarck—on second thoughts—ultimately agreed, on condition that the invitations to the Conference should be issued by the King of Holland, and that the basis of its business should be—"dismantling of the fortress, and neutralisation of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg (while still secured to the House of Orange) under the guarantee of the European Powers."

Bismarck accepts a Conference.

This was a very considerable concession to the demands of France, a very marked and unexpected change of front on the part of Bismarck. What had been the cause of it? The cause, indeed, was complex. In the first place, the King was by no means so eager as some of those about him to hasten the inevitable trial of conclusions with France. Secondly, Bismarck himself came to see that Prussia's right to garrison Luxemburg had

And why?

* Rothan, p. 276.

really now become doubtful, as indeed it was;* and he was unwilling to plunge the nation into war for anything but a truly righteous cause. But, thirdly, and more, perhaps, than all the rest, he was afraid to grapple with France while leaving a very uncertain Austria on his left flank. England, it is true, did not conceal her sympathy with the modified French demand; but Bismarck knew that, in the event of a struggle, England's participation in it would be restricted to the giving of merely moral aid. Russia, on the other hand, while pursuing a sort of free-lance policy, seemed more inclined to listen to the blandishments of Prussia than to the protestations of Austria, her other ardent suitor. But the attitude of Austria to reconstituted Germany was yet by no means to be trusted.

Count Beust, into whose hands, after the war of 1866, Francis Joseph committed the direction of his

* In the course of a Debate in the Prussian Chamber, on the 24th September of the same year, one speaker (Herr Bebel, Social-Democrat) observing that Luxemburg had been "lost to Germany," Count Bismarck replied as follows:—"We resigned the right to garrison Luxemburg, believing that right to have been rendered doubtful by the dissolution of the old German Confederacy; but, in so doing, we did not lose the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg to Germany. It remains a neutral and independent State, and has not been appropriated by any of our neighbours. This is the true state of affairs. In my opinion we ought to be grateful to his Majesty that he withstood the temptation to lead his armies to new victories, seeing the cause of war would have been a mere right of garrison contested by our neighbours, and no longer maintainable by ourselves. A Sovereign in the habit of himself leading his army to the field, who has witnessed the fall of so many of his warriors, and seen their eyes glazed in death, does not lightly resolve upon war. Moreover, there is the European guarantee for Luxemburg, which fully makes up to us for the evacuation of the works."

foreign policy, had described the military conventions between North and South as a distinct breach of the Treaty of Prague. He had (January, 1867) vainly endeavoured to bring about a Triple Alliance between France, Italy, and Austria. And more than all that, he had positively declined the offer of an alliance with the new North German Confederation. This offer was conveyed to him from Bismarck by Count Tauffkirchen, a Bavarian statesman, about the middle of April (1867) when the Luxemburg question threatened to end in war; and the proposed alliance, of course, was directed against France. But it was declined by Beust, who reminded Count Tauffkirchen that Francis Joseph could never thus show his gratitude to Napoleon, who had, or believed he had, arrested the Prussians at the gates of Vienna; and asked what Austria was likely to get, in the event of victory, beyond a richly bound copy of the Treaty of Prague.

Beust declines Bismarck's offers of alliance.

There can be little doubt that this rejection of his offer of alliance at Vienna did much to make Bismarck abandon his attitude of *non possumus* with regard to Luxemburg, and to accept the proposal of a European Conference on his own conditions. The Conference, which was attended by representatives of England, France, Russia, Austria, Prussia, Holland, Belgium, and Italy, met in London on the 7th May, and in four days it had finished its formal labours.* Peace—which

The Luxemburg Conference (London, 1867).

* By this Treaty (of London, 11th May) Prussia agreed to withdraw her garrison from Luxemburg and dismantle the fortress, while the Powers

was on the very point of being broken—was meanwhile thus preserved, but every one felt that it had only been patched up. France had compelled Prussia to withdraw from Luxemburg, but Prussia had prevented France from entering it, and there was deep dissatisfaction on both sides. The Germans were exasperated that the French, even to this extent, had successfully interfered with their national development, and found but partial consolation in the fact that the danger to which they were exposed had hastened the military assimilation of the whole Fatherland. The French, on the other hand, sheathed their half-drawn swords with a wrathful clash and a revengeful curse that their predatory aims had again been baffled.

The courtesies of a truce.

By all the world, but especially by the French and German peoples themselves, it was felt that the Luxemburg Treaty was nothing more than the conclusion of a brief truce; but, while there was a truce, why should the captains of the opposing camps not meet and exchange the courtesies of apparent friendship? Before the Luxemburg difference became acute, King William had accepted the invitation of Napoleon to visit the great Exhibition of Paris; and now that the quarrel had meanwhile been compounded, there was no reason

guaranteed the complete neutrality of the Grand Duchy under the Crown of Holland. As a set-off against its neutralisation, *i.e.*, its political or territorial loss to Germany, Luxemburg continued to be a member of the Zollverein; and a further bond of connection between it and the Fatherland was created in 1872, when the Imperial Government acquired by treaty the administration of all the railways in the Grand Duchy.

why he should not keep his word, and take his Premier with him.

"We hope," wrote M. Granier de Cassagnac, "that the Prussian Minister will not carry his audacity so far as to afflict us with his presence, and to brave our righteous resentment."* "Paris," wrote the *Moniteur* on the other hand, "will lose sight of the political adversary, and only view in M. de Bismarck the guest of France." But Bismarck was not so sure of this, and in any case thought of excusing himself by the state of his health, and the multiplicity of his duties, for not going to pay his respects to the Emperor. But a word from the King made him at once change his mind. "The King," he said to M. Benedetti, "thinks I am afraid, and that ever since my life was attempted I have been haunted by the fear of assassins."

"Afraid of assassins? No, not I!"

Accompanied, among others, by Counts Bismarck and Moltke, King William arrived in Paris on the 5th June—a few days after his nephew, the Czar, with whom was Prince Gortchakoff. Napoleon had made a point of asking his sovereign guests to come in this order; but, if his aim in doing this was political, it was defeated by a very untoward incident. While returning from a grand review in the Bois de Boulogne, the Czar was shot at by a young Polish mechanic, named Berezowski, in whose heart was concentrated all the revengeful hatred borne by his exiled countrymen

Bismarck in Paris; Berezowski and the Czar.

* Rothan, p. 413 et seq.

towards the autocratic ruler whom they looked upon as their truculent oppressor.* The memory of the insurrection of 1863—of that insurrection which, with the aid of Prussia, and in spite of the intercession of France, had been quenched with blood—was still fresh in their suffering minds, and this was the result. For the sake of appearance the Czar did not hasten his departure from Paris, but he left it with anything but kindly feelings towards the nation which harboured so many thousands of his implacable ill-wishers; and who can tell to what extent Berezowski's bullet may not have influenced the Emperor Alexander's attitude to the war of 1870?†

* "Of the several thousand Poles eating the bread of exile in France, one has aimed a shot at the Czar. It appears the melancholy colony has been in a state of intense excitement ever since the arrival of the Sovereign whom they regard as their one uncompromising enemy upon earth. Accustomed to persecution on the part of Russia, and to support on that of France, they were provoked at witnessing a cordial meeting between the rulers of the two very countries they thought least likely to join in friendly intercourse. Was France, beloved France, suddenly to abandon their cause, casting in her lot with their hereditary foe? Was Napoleon, the nephew of the uncle they had served so well, to throw them overboard after all, and ally himself with their adversary? Heated by the arrival of the Czar, irritated by the courtesies shown him, the more ardent spirits among them were positively maddened by the fear of losing the only chance they believed they had of recovering independence. Personal rancour aggravated political hatred, and the recollections of the immediate past did not tend to allay their anger. They knew they bore love to no Russian man; but they felt particularly aggravated at Alexander exhibiting himself to their gaze when he had so recently crushed them with an iron hand."—*Times* Correspondent.

† With this incident may be compared the barbarous insults offered by the Paris populace to King Alphonso, when returning to his capital in the autumn of 1883, from a visit to the German Emperor (at Homburg), who had honoured his royal guest by making him chief of a regiment of Uhlans, garrisoned at Strasburg—insults which had the immediate effect of drawing closer the bonds of political friendship between Spain and Germany, as was, among other things, proved by the return visit in the

The Czar did not make so favourable an impression on the Parisians as the kindly, serious, and chivalrous King William, who with his paladins were the observed of all observers at that hollow and high-sounding Carnival of Peace — with its *fêtes* and banquets, its military displays, its show of millennial embracing, and its apotheosis of the Empire, which, "to its laughing visitors, seemed to be at the height of its glory."* While M. de Bismarck, we are told, grimly went about feeling the national pulse and preparing for the future, General Moltke took quiet "strategic walks" in the neighbourhood of Paris. "Adieu, dear brother and friend," faltered King William with genuine emotion

"Adieu, but *au revoir!"*

winter of the same year of the German Crown Prince to Madrid, where he was received with extraordinary honour and enthusiasm. (See p. 144, vol. II.)

* Here is a glimpse of Bismarck in Paris then from "Court and Social Life in France, under Napoleon III.," by Mr. Felix Whitehurst:—"I do not know how many people in all those excited throngs of spectators thought that the masses of trained soldiers were, after all, only the coarse weapons in the hands of men whose scheming brains controlled and set in motion those dormant forces; but to me the most interesting feature in this unparalleled show (a review of 55,000 troops at Longchamps) was the astute Russian statesman (Gortchakoff) and his equally astute German rival (Bismarck) riding side by side in such a spot and in such a company." . . . . "There were a good many cries of 'Bismarck' from people who fancied they recognised his now well-known features under the spiked helmet; but it was not applause that was intended by this; I hardly think it was anything more than curiosity." . . . . And again, "The Quadrille of Honour having been danced (at a grand ball in the Hôtel de Ville, given by Baron Haussmann, as representative of the city and municipality of Paris), and 'God preserve the Emperor' played and tremendously cheered, the Imperial and Royal party walked through the rooms. It was a brilliant *cortége*. There was great anxiety to see the Czar, but really I think Herr von Bismarck was the greatest object of interest."

in taking leave of Napoleon and his lovely consort; "*Adieu*, but *au revoir*"—and the sentence was finished by the attendant Genius of History, who sadly whispered —"at Sedan."

Bismarck, Beust, and Napoleon.

The events of the next three years all turned on Bismarck's endeavour to complete his work by welding North and South into one homogeneous whole. But it was equally the aim of Louis Napoleon and of Count Beust to frustrate or retard the accomplishment of this end. These were the two forces now at work in Germany, and it remained to be seen in what their opposition would result. Happily for Bismarck's policy, the Emperor of the French was short-sighted enough not to perceive that, in seeking to thwart it, he was doing all he could to promote its success.

France and the Treaty of Prague.

For France, the main articles in the Treaty of Prague were those which stipulated that, if the people of North Schleswig elected to be ceded to Denmark, they should be ceded accordingly; and also that the Southern States, "while forming a Union whereof the national connection with the North was reserved for a more defined agreement between both parties, should maintain an independent international existence." To watch over the observance of these stipulations seemed to be all the more imperative to France, as they had been inserted in the Treaty of Peace at the instance of Napoleon; but the question arose: to what extent was France entitled to insist on the execution of an instrument, to which she

herself was not a party? As regards the "international and independent existence" of the South, Bismarck had shown what he thought of that fine scheme when he concluded the military treaties *on the day before* the signature of the Peace of Prague.

The French were wrathful enough at this, but a further stone of grievous offence was in store for them. For, a few minutes before entering the train that was to convey him to Paris with King William, Bismarck had signed the preliminaries of an agreement with representatives of the Southern States touching the creation of a common German Parliament for dealing with the commerce and customs of the whole Fatherland. To the popular representatives of North Germany, already forming the Reichstag, were to be added deputies similarly chosen from the States south of the Main, and all these together were to constitute a new Assembly for legislating exclusively on matters connected with the trade and financial interests of the nation. This *Zoll-Parlament*—which, though created in July, 1867, did not meet till April of the following year—was a great step in advance towards the national goal, but it was by no means yet equivalent to a *Voll-Parlament* (full Parliament). And yet it re-aroused the susceptibilities of the French, who were fain to regard it as another flagrant breach of the Treaty of Prague. "Where is the 'internationally independent existence' of the Southern States?" cried the alarmed French. "Where is the 'Union' of these States, which

The Customs-Parliament, and the "waters of the Red Sea."

was to be the condition precedent of that existence?" retorted Bismarck, who only regretted that the South had not yet formed itself into a separate Confederation with a Parliament like that of the North, for in that case "the two Assemblies could not have been kept apart longer than the waters of the Red Sea after the passage of the Israelites."*

Napoleon could only behold the progress of this process of amalgamation between North and South with passive impatience, but he was quick to find other means of asserting the immemorial right of France to meddle with the affairs of Germany. For scarcely had he extricated himself from the dilemma in which he had been placed by his Luxemburg manœuvre, than he began to manipulate with Schleswig. Having failed to throw a bolt at the rising edifice of German unity from the vantage-ground of Holland, he now shifted his engine of assault to Denmark.

Napoleon inspires Denmark.

Quoth Copenhagen to Berlin, after the due inspiration from Paris: "What about the *plébiscite* in North Schleswig to determine its cession to us, or otherwise, in conformity with the Treaty of Prague?" "Oh," replied Berlin to Copenhagen, "before discussing this subject, you must give us guarantees for the protection of the German

Dialogue between Copenhagen and Berlin.

* Speech in Constituent Reichstag, 10th April, 1867, on the motion (which was adopted) for inserting the following clause into the Federal Constitution: "The entrance of the South German States, or one of them, into the Confederation, can be effected on the motion of the Federal President by means of a law."

element in the ceded population, and agree to take over a proportionate share of the public debt of the Duchies." "No, that we cannot do; your demands are preposterous;" and this refusal of the Danes was endorsed by Napoleon, who caused it to be declared in Berlin that the guarantees demanded by Prussia would only prove the seeds of eternal contention with Denmark. Whereupon Bismarck hastened to answer in Paris that, as regarded the execution of the Treaty of Prague, Prussia had only to reckon with her co-signatory Austria, and that he could not admit the claims of any other Power to have a say in the matter—an astonishing rebuff to the Paris journal, *La France*, which wrote: "*We* are Europe;" and which had appealed for subscriptions in aid of the denationalised Danes.

The excitement which had been produced in Germany by the Luxemburg affair now began to bubble up again; for, unlike Luxemburg, Schleswig was now an integral part of Germany, and the nation began to ask whether Napoleon, after all, meant to pick a quarrel with it? "Oh, do not be so sensitive," said the Emperor, seeing he had again gone too far, "I meant no harm," and at the same time the official trumpeter of the French nation was ordered to sound the retreat. "No Note, on the Schleswig-Holstein or on any other question," wrote the *Moniteur*, "has been presented to the Cabinet of Berlin." The *Moniteur* was quite right. For the representations of Napoleon had been conveyed in a

The official trumpeter of France blows a retreat.

Despatch (which is different diplomatically from a *Note*, is it not?), and this the French Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin had only read out, without leaving a copy.* But while the *Moniteur* thus blew the retreat, other self-appointed buglers of the French nation puffed out their vociferous cheeks to sound the advance. Headed by one Morin, a deputy, a batch of anti-German journalists† repaired to Copenhagen, where flags were hung out and cannon fired in their honour, and where the toast of the "immortal champions of Danish rights" was responded to with bumpers to the health of "the first heroes in the world."‡

The bitter feelings produced in Germany by all these proceedings were intensified about the same time (latter half of August, 1867) by the famous Salzburg Interview, which figured so conspicuously in all the newspapers. Accompanied by his consort, Napoleon travelled through South Germany to Salzburg to meet their Austrian Majesties. The ostensible motive for this trip on the part of the French Imperial couple was simply a desire to offer their personal condolence to Francis Joseph on the tragic end of his brother,

Napoleon in South Germany: meets Francis Joseph at Salzburg.

* It was said at the time that Bismarck revealed to Napoleon the existence of an alleged secret clause in the Treaty of Prague stipulating that Prussia might wait till 1870 before taking a *plébiscite* of the North-Schleswigers. But the vote was never taken, and at last in 1878 Austria consented to the abrogation of the famous Fifth Article. See our chapter on the "Foreign Affairs of the Empire," p. 109 of Vol. II.

† "*Vingt députés et journalistes français.*"

‡ "*Politische Geschichte der Gegenwart*" (1867), by Prof. Müller of Tübingen.

Maximilian of Mexico, who had fallen a victim to that French habit of interference with the affairs of others which now roused the suspicion of the Fatherland.* Germany did not believe that Napoleon's motive in going to Salzburg was altogether so simple as avowed, and the Emperor himself had reason enough to realise this fact in his courageous passage through South Germany. At the various stations where he stopped, official courtesy, it is true, was frigidly observed; but at Augsburg some hospitable cheers were instantly drowned in angry hisses and yells.† The Press, too, rallying

* One of the great conceptions of Napoleon's reign—according to his English biographer — was the idea of establishing on the American Continent a powerful Catholic monarchy, which should give France an important ally beyond the Atlantic, and curb the restless ambition of the United States. In 1861 a common expedition was agreed upon by England, France, and Spain, whose subjects had suffered outrages at the hands of the Mexican authorities; but though England and Spain retired after settling their claims and obtaining guarantees from the Government of Juarez, the forces of Napoleon under Bazaine remained behind to carry out the scheme which underlay the ostensible motive of their presence in Mexico. After disastrous vicissitudes the Republic was overthrown, and in June, 1864, the Archduke Maximilian of Austria entered the Mexican capital as Emperor of the Catholic monarchy which had been created for French purposes by French bayonets. Such a violent beginning could only have a similar end; and this ensued on 19th June, 1867, when Maximilian was shot at Queretaro by the Juarists, after the French army, by the threats of the United States, had been forced to evacuate Mexico. This disgraceful story of French interference formed the saddest page in all the disastrous annals of the Second Empire. Mexico, the Rhine frontier, Luxemburg, &c., had all diminished the *prestige* of the successful perpetrator of the *coup d'état;* and how to regain his waning popularity was the one absorbing thought of Louis Napoleon. If he could only gratify the wishes of his countrymen with regard to rising Germany!

† "Of the four Southern Sovereigns, each adopted a different line of conduct on the occasion of this memorable trip. The Grand Duke of Baden, son-in-law of the King of Prussia, paid his respects to the traveller

round Prussia, raised its voice with one accord in no ambiguous tone against the foreigner whom it believed to be plotting against the unification of the Fatherland, and much minatory ink was spilt.*

By way of throwing oil on the troubled waters, the

during the few minutes' delay at Carlsruhe, his capital. The King of Würtemberg, the Czar's brother-in-law, neither received the Imperial traveller on the borders of his kingdom nor in his capital, but contented himself with seeing him for a minute at the Ulm terminus, just as Napoleon was leaving his dominions. The King of Bavaria accompanied the Emperor almost all the way from Munich to Salzburg; but the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, the avowed friend of Austria, was the most demonstrative in his courtesies. Napoleon not having to pass through his State, the Grand Duke took care to find himself in the neighbourhood of Salzburg, and, as a matter of course, received an invitation to add to the *éclat* of the meeting by his presence."—*Times* Correspondent.

* "The one thing we beg to ask," wrote the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, "is whether Germany will permit the Emperor of the French to interfere in her domestic affairs?" "We cannot," said the *Cologne Gazette*, "believe in the possibility of any German princes accepting the protection of France. We cannot believe that the disgraceful times of the Rhine-Bund are about to be renewed." The *Weser Zeitung* remarked: "It is very probable that, on the first symptom of foreign intermeddling, the two halves of Germany, like a quarrelsome couple forgetting matrimonial differences upon the interference of a stranger, will shake hands, make common cause against the intruding busybody, and give him a tremendous thrashing for his pains. We confess that we long for the day." The *Volks-Zeitung* (of Stuttgart) wrote: "Anything more revolting than the spectacle witnessed on that Saturday night cannot well be imagined. We saw a hoary tyrant pale, and casting furtive looks about him, as though he expected every moment to feel the assassin's knife in his ribs. We saw a prince, whose mere appearance among us was sufficient to change peace into war, the soldiers stationed for his protection along the line of rails having been ordered to load with ball-cartridge. We saw a man the very impersonation of all that is hostile to liberty, a conspirator against the quiet of Europe, a tourist travelling in our own country to concoct mischief against us and the rest of Germany."—"He is gone at last!" exclaimed another Stuttgart journal. "Who? *He*. He has left Germany, and it is advisable to open the window and let in a little fresh air. No doubt our South German kings did not feel quite at their ease during the infliction of his visit."

French Minister of Foreign Affairs issued a Circular in which, while maintaining that the visit to Salzburg was merely one of condolence, he admitted that—

Explanations, and effect, of the Salzburg Interview.

"The Sovereigns of two great Empires could not have remained several days (five) together without interchanging political ideas, but that their conversation had neither aimed at, nor resulted in, combinations which there was nothing in the present situation of Europe to justify."*

In a similar Circular, Bismarck professed to be satisfied with the explanations thus given,

"all the more, inasmuch as the reception given to the first disquieting news (about the Salzburg interview) has again demonstrated the fact that German national sentiment cannot endure the idea of the nation's affairs being placed under the tutelage of foreign intruders, or conducted so as to suit other interests than our own."†

Bismarck, we say, *professed* to be satisfied with the explanations of France and Austria; but he still had his own misgivings, and these were shared by his countrymen who knew that the relations of South to North must have been freely discussed at Salzburg. The result was a decided quickening of the movement for

* Circular Despatch by the Marquis de Moustier of 25th August. The Salzburg interview had lasted from the 18th to the 23rd.

† Said the *Times* Correspondent, writing under date October 5th (1867): "General Fleury, who recently arrived at Berlin, has confidentially informed this Cabinet on the part of his Sovereign, that the publication of any more Notes such as the last Circular of Count Bismarck's would be calculated to kindle a warlike excitement in France, which the Government might find it difficult to appease. Rather good. Napoleon first indulges in a hostile demonstration against Germany, and then complains of Prussia accepting, somewhat sarcastically, it is true, his denial that he has done so."

their amalgamation, and for the bringing of all the flock under the fold before stragglers could be intercepted by the wolf.

Baden knocks in vain at the door of the North.

The Grand Duke of Baden—son-in-law of King William—was the first of the South German Sovereigns to seek admittance into the Confederation of the North; but, to his surprise, his offer for the present was rejected. His fellow Princes south of the Main were not yet so far advanced in their national ideas, and, until they were, Bismarck thought it better that Baden should remain among them as leavening of the mass. To separate Baden from its loose connection with Bavaria, Würtemberg, and Hesse, could only, he thought, act upon these three States "like the skimming of the cream from a basin of milk, which tended to make the rest become sour."* And meanwhile he would not force the will of the stragglers outside the national fold, but work and wait.

"The North German Confederacy," he said, "will readily meet the South German Governments when requiring to extend and cement the national relations between the North and South of Germany, but we shall always leave it to the free and unbiassed determination of our South German allies to decide the degree to which the mutual *rapprochement* is to advance."†

Among these allies themselves there was still a very considerable difference of opinion as to the degree to

* This apt and forcible simile was used by Bismarck in a speech in the Reichstag, 24th February, 1870.

† Circular Despatch of 7th September, in answer to French explanation of Salzburg interview, before referred to.

which this *rapprochement* should be carried. In Hesse, the Grand-Duke and his Minister Dalwigk were notoriously anti-Prussian; while Bavaria was swayed by a majority in the Chamber, as well as by the Clericals, against whom the high-minded and far-seeing Premier, Prince Hohenlohe, who championed the national idea, could not at first prevail. Würtemberg, too, seemed to be equally controlled by the Democrats, the chief article of whose creed was hatred of Prussia; and the Democrats were zealously abetted by the Jesuits, who naturally enough felt a mortal enmity towards the great Protestant Power who was fast gathering all Germany under the shadow of her wings.

Attitude of the South to the unity movement.

These various sentiments of the South were strikingly manifested when, in the autumn of 1867, the new Customs Union and the Military Treaties with Prussia and the North came on for discussion. In Baden and Hesse these agreements at once received the almost unanimous sanction of the Chambers; but in Bavaria and Würtemberg they met with an amount of opposition which threatened to loosen the bonds of partial and progressive union already established with the North. In Bavaria, where parliamentary sanction of the Military Convention was not requisite, a desperate attempt was made—mainly by the noblesse—to reject the Customs Treaty, which accorded certain necessary prerogatives to Prussia; while in Würtemberg, on the other hand, the Democrats were not unwilling to accept the Commercial Union with all its un-

doubted benefits, but would hear nothing of community of military duties involving so many burdens and dangers.

"Aut Cæsar, aut nihil!"

How this serious crisis would have ended, without a timely word of warning from Berlin, it is hard to say; but Bismarck now declared —and in saying this he was only expressing the mind of Parliament—that the military and commercial interests of North and South were inseparable. Those States, therefore, which would not accept the new Customs Union, would have to leave the Zollverein altogether; and, on the other hand, Prussia could only remain commercially one with those members of the German family who freely accepted the offensive and defensive alliance. *Aut Cæsar, aut nihil!* Placed before this alarming alternative, and pressed upon by a public opinion more enlightened than their own, the Democrats of Stuttgart, as well as the Aristocrats of Munich, had at last to yield, and the whole nation was overjoyed at this tardy triumph of patriotism over prejudice. Bismarck, of course, never doubted that the Sovereigns of the South—whatever the attitude of their subjects—would remain true to their treaty engagements; but now the performance of these engagements was guaranteed by the united word of Princes and peoples.

High were the hopes of all men when, next spring (27th April, 1868), the Customs Parliament met at Berlin—as the first representative body of the entire nation convened since the downfall of the Ger-

manic Empire.* "It needed not much discrimination," wrote an observer, "to read in the faces of those present the feeling that they were assisting in a great historical act." But this historical act did not yield the results expected of it by all sanguine and patriotic minds. Though convoked for "the exclusive discussion of cotton and tobacco," it was hoped by the Unionists that the Customs Parliament would "pave the way to the consummation of the national destinies." Pave the way it did, indeed, but very slowly, and not with anything like the swiftness of the "re-closing waters of the Red Sea." "No horseman can afford to be always at the gallop," replied Bismarck to a friend who twitted him with the tardy march of events. For this tardiness the Southern deputies were partly, if not wholly, to blame. The Unionists in the South had been signally defeated at

"Fear finds no echo in German hearts."

* "Of the eighty-six Southern members, whose addition to the 297 members of the Federal Assembly converts the latter body into the Customs Parliament, about forty are the representatives of Ultramontane or Republican creeds. These dissimilar allies are averse from unity unless established under Austrian or else ultra-democratic auspices, and would repeal the Zollverein and cancel the military treaties were their power commensurate with their ill-will. Nearly twenty-five are unity men, ready to accept the Federal Charter as it stands, though desirous, if they could, of amending it in a Liberal sense. About as many hold an intermediate position, being equally opposed to the complete absorption of the South by the North as to their total separation. Strictly adhering to the Military and Customs League, this section yet professes no wish to join the Confederacy. But if the eighty-six new-comers are divided into three several sections on the question of unity, they are so far agreed on most other subjects as to offer a common opposition to Conservatism in the administration of domestic affairs. They will have little occasion to manifest their home politics in a Parliament whose allotted task confines them to the discussion of tariff and excise."—*Times* Correspondent.

the elections to the Customs Parliament; the Separatists, who were returned would not consent to discuss national politics when they had only come to frame tariffs;* and Bismarck remained true to his expressed resolve not to force to the water the horse that would not drink. One Separatist, knowing with what malevolence Napoleon was watching the approximation of North and South, and how probable it was that he would even draw the sword to prevent their union, took it upon him to warn the Customs Parliament against dealing with questions beyond its competency, "lest it might thus at last set rolling the (French) avalanche which had long hung threateningly on the mountain's brink." Bismarck contented himself by assuring the Separatists that national blessings would certainly not be obtruded upon them, and by reminding them, at the same time, that "an appeal to fear had never yet found an echo in German hearts."

The discussion of a commercial treaty with Austria was the main task of the Customs Parliament, which revealed free-trade tendencies of a very decided kind; but yet there were times when the Separatists could not restrict to the service of mere rags and raw-iron the sentiments which were struggling for expression in every patriotic breast. At a grand fraternal banquet which wound up the session—it only

"The blossoms of spring."

* So opposed were these Southern Separatists to fusion with the North that, whenever any spark of a political idea or reference began to glimmer in the speech of a Unionist, they would cry out, "Order, order," "Keep to the point," "Wine, wine," or "Raw-iron," "Rags," "Linen," etc.

lasted about a month—Prince Hohenlohe,* amid tremendous cheering, proposed "The Unity of Germany." "The short time we have been together," said Bismarck, "has vanished like a spring day; may it bear fruit like the blossoms of spring!"† "We have seen," exclaimed a Bavarian, "that, as every time has its man, so the second half of this century has its man for Germany; and whatever may be the opinion of others, I, for my part, behold this man in Count Bismarck."

A waiting policy.

Prompt to act on fitting opportunity, Bismarck likewise showed that he could perform the difficult task of pursuing a waiting policy. Possessing the temper of a Hotspur or a Chatham, he scorned not, nevertheless, to borrow traits from the character of a Fabius Cunctator. To hasten his work, he knew, was to incur the risk of spoiling it; and now that most of it had already been done, there was no great hurry with the remainder. By a dead-lift effort the stone had already been set rolling—*that* was the chief thing, and nothing could now impede its passage to the foot of the hill. Bismarck did not really wish the South to join the North until the former was prepared to do so of its own accord—with its whole heart and mind—believing that to coerce its will would only introduce explosive elements into the new Confederation,

* The Bavarian Premier was returned as a deputy to the Customs Parliament.

† "Spring," one member of the Customs Parliament had said, "Spring has now broken over Germany, and though some of us still pelt one another with snowballs, it will not be very long before the advancing spring deprives them of all material for this pastime."

which in itself was not yet over-free from the operation of centrifugal forces.

Apart from the gigantic labour of consolidating that Confederation, and of settling its foreign relations, Bismarck had more than enough to do with the equally difficult work of fitting the annexed provinces into the complicated yet stable organism of the Prussian State. The real task of the conqueror begins when he sets himself to reconcile the vanquished to their yoke; and with respect to Hanover, at least, this was arduous enough. The better to lighten his labour, the annexed provinces had been placed under an absolutist *régime* for about a year (till 1st October, 1867), when they were admitted into constitutional community with the rest of the monarchy. This date had been fixed as the point when all serious resistance to the conqueror would be likely to have been crushed, or rendered hopeless; but it was only at this point that a show of dogged recalcitrancy really began.

Domestic labours.

In the case of Hanover, the chief recusant, naturally enough, was King George himself. A fugitive from his dominions, the royal Guelph had sought shelter at Hietzing, near Vienna, where he established a sort of Court, and continued to intrigue against Prussia much in the same way as English James conspired against Dutch William in his exile at Saint Germains. His schemes of active hostility against Prussia, hatched under the favouring shadow of the Hofburg, were not unknown to Bismarck; and yet Bismarck ventured to brave the dis-

Hanover and her dethroned King.

pleasure of his own countrymen by supporting King William in his desire to pension the Sovereigns whom he had evicted, yet would not entirely beggar. But, indeed, King George was far from being in the mendicant state, for he had £600,000 snugly invested in English stocks; and, fleeing from Herrenhausen, he had managed to carry away with him plate and property to the value of at least four million thalers. All this—forming nearly a million and a quarter sterling—was a very handsome fortune, even for a deposed King; but it was further swelled by the generosity of His Prussian Majesty, who may not have wished to discredit one of his own order—even when discrowned—by an appearance of penury, and who at the same time wished to save himself from adding the semblance of undue rapacity to an act of legitimate revenge.

By way, therefore, of compensating the deposed Sovereigns for the loss of their crowns, handsome allowances were made them out of their confiscated revenues. The Elector of Hesse and the Duke of Nassau received capital sums of about eight and nine million thalers respectively, while to the King of Hanover were given sixteen millions. But when the Chamber (in February, 1868) was asked to sanction the treaties (concluded in September, 1867) under which these indemnities had to be paid, it displayed an opposition in the case of King George which Bismarck could only overcome by a threat to resign. The country could not see the wisdom of the generosity which conferred on the dethroned

Prussia's "unparalleled magnanimity."

monarch an income equal to twice the amount of his previous civil-list, thus supplying him with the sinews of secret war against Prussia. In doing this, thought the nation, King William was only acting like William of Orange, who unwittingly furnished Balthazar Gérard with a fund for procuring the means of taking his benefactor's life. But Bismarck was firm. In paying King George a large indemnity for the loss of his sovereign rights, as he once said :—

"We were actuated by three several motives; in the first place, we wished to spare the feelings of his former subjects, who apprehended that the last of an ancient dynasty might be exposed to pecuniary difficulties; secondly, we wished to oblige those friendly Courts, England especially, who had addressed us in favour of the late Sovereign, and whom we had no wish to offend in a matter wherein our interests were not at stake; thirdly, we had been assured by some of those Courts, that though King George could not be prevailed upon to sign a formal act of abdication, still the acceptance of our money would make him feel 'bound in honour' to desist from active intrigues." *

But, while professing his readiness to accept the money, King George very soon began to show that he deemed himself bound neither in law nor in honour to refrain from intriguing, and indeed openly acting, against the usurper of his crown. About the time of the Luxemburg complication, a Hanoverian legion had been quick to form itself in Holland with the view of joining the French

The Hanoverian Legion.

* Prussian Chamber, 29th January, 1869. "I remember perfectly well that 'bound in honour' (the Count said the words in English) were the exact words used on that occasion (by England)."

should they invade Prussia; and from Holland these legionaries smuggled themselves into Switzerland, there to await the anxiously hoped-for day when Napoleon should draw the sword to rearrange Europe on its old basis. Finding no proper rest for the soles of their feet in Switzerland, the desperate and deluded mercenaries passed into France with the aid of Austrian passports sent from Hietzing; and in France, on the strength of moneys derived from their deposed and subsidised King, they continued to drill and to await their day of revenge.

Anti-Prussian intrigues of King George.

It was well known that King George was maintaining a treasonable correspondence with leading men in his late dominions. Through his agents he had enlisted some subjects of the King of Prussia, and caused others to desert. He had established journals to wage incessant war against the new order of things; he continued to support his legion in France, which cost him 300,000 thalers a year; a numerously signed petition to the Emperor Napoleon, entreating him to liberate Hanover from the Prussian yoke, had been taken to Paris by a confidant of King George; and on the occasion of his silver wedding at Hietzing, about a fortnight after the Prussian Chamber sanctioned the indemnity treaties, he indulged in most inflammatory language to a crowd of his previous subjects, who, at His Majesty's cost, had made a pilgrimage to see him and drink to the restoration of his kingdom. Instead of reconciling him to his fate, the compensation which he had received from Prussia

only seemed to add fuel to the flames of his anti-Prussian fury. Austria, who harboured this conspirator against Prussia, and France, who tolerated the presence of his legion, might be remonstrated with. But there was only one means, thought Bismarck, of coping with this still belligerent King without a crown, and that was by cutting off his supplies.

On the urgent advice, therefore, of Bismarck, King William at once impounded the indemnity granted to his implacable cousin of Hanover, as well as that of the Elector of Hesse, who, equally unmoved by the "unparalleled magnanimity"* of Prussia, had appealed to all the Rulers of Europe to re-seat him on his throne. The Chamber was only too ready to sanction the reversal of an act of generosity, to which it had most reluctantly assented. But even now the door of mercy was left open to the two unyielding Sovereigns, seeing that their property was not confiscated but only sequestered, pending their refusal to submit wholly and unconditionally to the events of 1866. One of the means employed by both of them to undo these events was the maintenance of a number of newspapers animated with the bitterest hatred of Prussia, and with the soul of falsehood, misrepresentation, and calumny; journals which did all they could to set France and Germany by the ears, and thus bring about a convulsion

Prussia tries sequestration instead of "magnanimity."

* "We owed King George nothing; but in the interest of peace we gave an example of magnanimity which, as far as I know, is without a parallel in the history of Europe." (Bismarck's reply to Count Münster in the Prussian House of Lords, 13th February, 1869.)

that would dismember Prussia and restore the dispossessed Princes to their thrones. It was complimentary to the power of a free Press—which Bismarck has often affected to despise—that he beheld in the fury of these anti-Prussian prints a real and imminent danger to the peace of Europe, which it behoved him to counteract with all promptness and energy.

And this he deemed could best be done by fighting the foe with his own weapons. Having captured the enemy's guns, he was quick to turn them against their owners by converting the interest accruing on the impounded revenues of the dethroned monarchs into a secret-service fund to be applied in watching and frustrating their anti-Prussian activity. It was during the debate on this subject that the Chancellor used an expression which has now become historical. "There is nothing of the spy in my whole nature," he said, "but I think we shall deserve your thanks if we devote ourselves to the pursuit of wicked *reptiles* into their very holes in order to see what they are about." Hence the expression "Reptile Fund," as applied to the means employed by the Prussian Government to combat the opposition of the Guelphs. Gradually that opposition was broken, but the weapon which broke it was not given up. It continued, indeed, to be wielded by the Government against all who resisted it in the field of domestic, and even foreign politics. But whereas the term "Reptile" was at first applied to an anti-Prussian scribe, it afterwards came to be reproachfully used by

The "Reptile Fund."

the Opposition of all newspapers and writers subsidised to support the Government itself through thick and thin.

Prussia dealt no less "magnanimously" with the people of Hanover than with their dispossessed King. Their King had been handsomely pensioned, and they themselves were granted the blessings of comparative self-government. Bismarck had promised them this on seeing that the friends of Prussia in Hanover gave proof of their sincerity by "burning their Guelph ships behind them." He wished to simplify the complicated and cumbrous machinery of the Prussian administration by conferring a certain degree of autonomy on *all* the provinces of the monarchy; and he perceived that a good beginning would be made in Hanover, where the work of decentralisation might be combined with that of reconciliation. Out, therefore, of the appropriated revenues of Hanover he proposed to grant to the annexed kingdom the interest on a capital of twelve million thalers, as a Provincial Fund for the administration and support of certain local institutions. But in this he was opposed by the Conservatives (in the Prussian Chamber), some of whom rejected the scheme altogether, while others approved it only in a very modified form.* And the latter carried their point—much to the mortification of Bismarck, who read them a severe homily on the sin and wickedness of their disloyalty.

Bismarck conciliates Hanover with home-rule.

* Instead of the interest on a fixed capital of twelve million thalers, the Conservatives proposed an annual grant of half a million, and their amendment was adopted.

The better, moreover, to mark his displeasure at their conduct, he took leave of absence for an indefinite time (February, 1868), and again retired to his sulky tent, like wrathful Achilles, with the view of bringing them to their senses. True, it was not long before they came to a better frame of mind; but still this breach between Bismarck and the Conservatives, who had always hitherto been his unquestioning supporters, now inaugurated that era of shifting party-ballast and permutation which has no parallel in any other nation, and which has often driven him to the verge of sheer despair. How to form a majority—natural or artificial—out of the kaleidoscopic fractions into which the Prussian, as well as the Federal Parliament, was split up—that now began to be, what it has always remained, Bismarck's deepest and most distracting care. In most other countries the Prime Minister is the outcome of a majority; but in Prussia and Germany a majority is the creation of the Prime Minister. Majorities may come and go, but he remains for ever; and he must rule by virtue of his skill at yoking alternate, and often incongruous, teams to the car of State.

And estranges the Conservatives.

Bismarck's decentralising and other schemes were displeasing to the old Conservatives who, Prussian to the core, still clung to the Manteuffel traditions, and could not elevate themselves to the enlightened standpoint from which their previous leader now found it necessary to direct the course of affairs. It has always been

The Conservative Scylla, and the Liberal Charybdis.

the main secret of Bismarck's success that he has known how to adapt himself to altered circumstances. He has always been the man of the time, because he has always changed with the time. Fossilised principles of action never found a place in his political creed. A Chauvinistic Prussian until he had placed his country at the head of Germany, he now rose above the love of his "narrower Fatherland,"* and became the embodiment of the national idea and life. This, of course, implied a certain amount of self-sacrifice on the part of Prussia, which the Conservatives of the Manteuffel school were not altogether prepared to make, and thus there arose a certain antagonism between them and their old Chief. But while thus, in the Prussian Diet, Bismarck began to be hampered by those who thought he was going too fast, he was at the same time set upon by a party in the Reichstag that deemed his pace intolerably slow.

A Liberal bait to the Separatist South.

The Liberals were impatient for the completion of the national unity, but the Government was deterred from precipitating the union of North and South, by difficulties at home and dangers abroad. Still, if Mahomet would not go to the mountain, might not the mountain be induced to go to Mahomet? One reason, as it was thought (but erroneously, in the opinion of Bismarck), why the Southerners still held out against union with their countrymen north of the Main, was that the new Federal institutions were not altogether to

* The Germans use the expression "*engeres Vaterland*" to describe the particular State in which they happen to be born.

their freedom-loving taste; but, if these institutions could be liberalised, might not the South be induced to come and knock at the door of the North? This was evidently the calculation of the Liberals in the Reichstag when, forgetful of the maxim that "the better is the enemy of the good," they began a series of attempts to cobble at the Constitution which they had but lately sanctioned.

And first they wanted to be paid for their legislative labours. But to this request Bismarck again contrived to make the Reichstag—by a very scant majority—shut its ears. Then Dr. Lasker moved that the immunity, enjoyed by members of the Federal Parliament from prosecution in respect of their intra-mural speeches, should be extended to the Assemblies of all the Federal States.* The supporters of this motion assumed, of course (though it was scarcely liberal of them to do so), that the local Diets would have to bow to the decision of the Reichstag on this subject, in the same way as a tribunal of first instance yields to a court of appeal. Bismarck still held, as he had always done, that unrestricted freedom of speech was an unmitigated evil, and that the law which gave him no protection against personal slander, within as well as without Parliament, was a defective one. But still the question seemed to him to have more a theoretical than a practical interest, and considering, as he did, that "all constitutional life was a series of

Freedom of parliamentary speech.

* Dr. Lasker's motion was based on the fact that some members of the Prussian Parliament had actually been prosecuted for slander.

compromises," he would see to it that the Prussian Government, at least, acted in the sense of Dr. Lasker's motion. That motion was carried by a large majority in the Reichstag, but it was vetoed by the Federal Council. It was in like manner approved by the Prussian Chamber, but, despite the advocacy of Bismarck, it was emphatically rejected by the Upper House. He had kept his word, and maintained the semblance of being a constitutional statesman, but perhaps he was inwardly glad that the reactionary Lords had boldly acted as *he* had thought.

Bismarck resists constitutional encroachments.

On this point he had managed to avoid a conflict, but in another matter it seemed as if the bitter quarrels of the "budgetless time" were about to be renewed. There had been presented to Parliament an Act for Administering the National Debt, and to this act was tacked a loan for laying the foundation of a Federal Fleet that would redound to the honour of regenerated Germany. It will sufficiently describe the former bill if we say that it still left the Chancellor supreme over the trustees of the country's debts; but the Reichstag arrogated to itself the right of direct control and impeachment over the Public Debt Commissioners. Bismarck regarded this as an encroachment on his function, seeing that, as Chancellor, or One-Man Ministry of the Confederation, he alone was constitutionally accountable for all the acts of the Government and of his subordinates. All executive authority centred in him, but Parliament aimed at usurping part of it. It was a

dispute for the possession of power. Neither side would yield, and things came to a dead-lock.

In analogous circumstances, six years before, Bismarck had entered on his famous conflict with the Prussian Chamber; but coercion, he saw, might in this instance better serve his turn than conflict. "If you persist," he said, "in your scheme of usurpation, we shall at once withdraw the Navy Loan, and where, then, will your infant-Hercules fleet be?" Treating this as a mere threat, Parliament approved the control-amendment of the Liberals, and lo! quick as lightning, the loan was at once withdrawn. Crowds of sailors and shipwrights were paid off; the clanking of constructive hammers suddenly ceased in the strenuous dockyards; the building of harbour fortifications was countermanded; vessels that were preparing to sail on a political mission to the far East were ordered to blow off steam, and vessels which had already put to sea were summarily recalled. Mightily alarmed were the Liberals at all this grim earnest, at this enforced turning of the tide, so to speak, of national development; at this crushing in the bud of the battle-ships that were to raise new-born Germany above the fear of petty sea-Powers like Sweden and Denmark, and even help to protect her coasts against the ironclad mammoths of France—of France who was arming to the teeth, and muttering vengeful malice! "Anything but that," protested the Liberals, on whom Bismarck's venturesome tactics had their full effect, and who now hastened to make a compromise which left

And brings the Liberals to their senses.

intact the supreme administrative authority of the Chancellor, while enabling him to raise the money for proceeding with the organisation of the fleet. The incident was a dramatic one, and well illustrated the principles of the National Liberals, whose motto has always been—"patriotism first, and party afterwards."

The audacious strategy of the Chancellor had forced them to raise their siege on the Constitution, but next session (1869) they returned to the attack with improved artillery. What they wanted this time was a regular Federal Ministry, responsible to Parliament. They had no faith in the "one-man power" in politics. The Chancellor was not a Minister, but a Dictator. It was not in the interest of the Confederacy that the whole executive should be vested in the person of the Chancellor; and besides, no single mortal, however gifted, was equal to the task. Was it not an anomaly that the several States had accountable Cabinets, while the common affairs of the nation were practically in the hands of one irresponsible agent? Manifold were their other reasons against the continuance of this non-ministerial kind of Government; but their arguments, though supported, as they were, by a parliamentary majority, could not shake Bismarck's resolution to maintain the Constitution as it was.*

The "one-man power" in politics.

* The motion of the National Liberals, aiming at the creation of a Federal Ministry, was carried by 111 to 100, but it was rejected by the Federal Council.

When that Constitution was framed, he had successfully resisted the demand of the Liberals for a Federal Ministry, and he was not going to comply with their request now. Responsibility, when divided, he said, was never so real as when confined to one; and as for the mere work of government, that was fully mastered by the standing departmental-committees of the Federal Council, which were so many ministries in themselves. The conduct of affairs required quickness, energy, and unity of action; and the exercise of these requisites in the Chancellor would only be hampered by ministerial colleagues. Separate ministries would imply centralisation, administrative brain-congestion; but Germany only wanted a moderate degree of internal union, like the Netherlands and the United States. Local freedom was the political ideal of all German races, and, instead of inducing the South to join the North, compliance with Liberal demands would only tend to "deepen the Main." The Unionists were not to suppose that, by "holding a lantern under a tree, they could help to ripen its fruit," or that, by "advancing the hands of the clock, they could thus accelerate the march of time."

Bismarck a "One-Man Ministry."

In another phase of their activity Bismarck had to rebuke them for actually seeking to put back the hands of the clock. The better to rivet together the new Confederation, the Government had prepared a Criminal Code for all North Germany; but moved, as Bismarck put it,

The advocate of capital punishment.

by the "sickly sentimentality" of the time, the Reichstag, by a very large majority, voted the total abolition of capital punishment. It was not, however, to be expected that a man of Bismarck's "blood and iron" temperament would consent to this. In a speech which will always remain a mine of argument on the subject, and in which he confessed his own belief in a future life,* he told Parliament that it must either change its mind or deprive the nation of the blessings of a Penal Code. The Prussian law visited no fewer than fourteen crimes with capital punishment, but by the new German Code these would be reduced to two—murder of any one, and attempted murder of a Federal Sovereign; nor from this minimum would the Government abate a jot. In one or two States —Saxony, Anhalt, Oldenburg, Bremen—punishment by death had already been abolished; and when it was proposed to leave the law there, at least, as it was, Bismarck came rushing back to Berlin from Varzin with the alarm of a man who has been told that his house is on fire. In another memorable speech, replete with the spirit of his unifying mission, he dwelt on the dangers of particularism, and at last succeeded in persuading the Reichstag to rescind its resolution. Once more the national idea had triumphed over professorial doctrine and party views, and one other tenacious hasp had been fixed in the structure of North German unity.

In the course of three short years this structure

* Reichstag, 1st March, 1870. (See p. 550, Vol. II., of this work.)

had assumed dimensions as imposing as they were solid, and in closing the fourth and last session of the Reichstag (26th May, 1870) King William recapitulated its labours with genuine satisfaction and pride. The results of these labours were a large variety of laws, all tending to weld together the tribes and races of the North into one homogeneous nation—with common interests, a common army, a common polity, and a recognised and respected place in the European family of States. The process of amalgamation in the North had prospered beyond all expectation, but the happy day of its union with the South gave yet no signs of dawning. The hopes of all patriots had been centred in the Customs Parliament—that representative body from *all* Germany; but this Assembly, with the instinct of rigorous obedience to orders characteristic of a military nation, had stuck to the consideration of rags and petroleum, and left politics alone. We have seen with what tactics the Liberals endeavoured to precipitate the junction of North and South, and how Bismarck frowned on their manœuvres as calculated to frustrate more than promote the end in view. Even in the spring of 1870, when the Liberals tabled a motion tantamount to a prayer for the admission of Baden into the Confederacy, he again declared that events were not yet ripe for the consummation of the nation's hopes. He remained true to his determination not to force the will of the South; and this determination was partly, but only partly, due to his wish not to furnish France,

Progress of national unification.

or any other jealous Power, with a pretext for meddling with the affairs of Germany.

Foreign policy.

Ever since the settlement of the Luxemburg dispute, this had been his greatest care; but it was a care of which the nation at large knew little, and that little was very vague. It was fortunate for Germany that her foreign policy, at least, was in the hands of a Minister wholly independent of shifting popular favour, who could thus conduct it with a unity and a continuity unknown to democratic Governments like that of England. Another element of its success, too, was its complete secrecy — a secrecy not even broken by diplomatic Blue Books, which Bismarck regarded as an abomination, as a drag on business, and as a source of sure offence to the Governments concerned.* The nation beheld its Chancellor labouring at the internal consolidation of the new Confederacy; but it was to the task of protecting the fresh, and as yet somewhat fragile edifice, from an external shock that he chiefly devoted himself. It was a proof of the predominance enjoyed by King William among the Federal Sovereigns, that the Prussian ambassadors at the Courts of all the Powers had been re-accredited as representatives of the North German Confederation. And it was not long before these Prusso-German ambassadors were called upon to give practical effect to the policy which animated their Government.

* In the Reichstag, on 22nd April, 1869, Bismarck delivered himself of a most interesting essay on Blue Books—which may be recommended to all who take an interest in the subject. (See also p. 216, Vol. II.)

That policy had been expressed by Count Moltke when, with wonderful penetration of the future, he said that—

"The only possible means of converting the enormous wealth spent in the service of war to the interests of peace was the formation in the heart of Europe of a Power which, unambitious of conquest itself, would yet be strong enough to forbid its neighbours from waging war. If such a blessing everbe conferred on humanity, it will be through Germany when she is strong enough—that is, Germany united."

Moltke makes a prophecy.

But Germany was not yet united, and she could not, therefore, yet forbid her neighbours from drawing the sword. But, if at present unable to dictate peace, she could at least even now act the part of peace-maker; and it will always be remembered to her credit that she graced the beginning of her existence as a modern nation, and gave earnest of her willingness to undertake the mission prophetically assigned her by Moltke, by taking the lead in extinguishing a fire which might have burst into a European conflagration.

The Cretan insurrection of 1868, and the consequent quarrel between Turkey and Greece, are still fresh in the mind of Europe; but it is forgotten, perhaps, that the Conference which met at Paris (January, 1869) to adjust that quarrel, and to the decision of which Greece humbly bowed, was convened at the instance of Count Bismarck.* "I have

Bismarck and the Cretan insurrection.

* "The Cretan commotion began immediately after the Seven Days' Campaign, when a great international conflict seemed to be close at hand. Peace being sooner restored than they anticipated, the Cretans nevertheless continued fighting the Turks, in the hope of profiting by a speedy

left none of the Powers (who signed the treaty of 1856) in ignorance of the fact," wrote M. Lavalette to M. Benedetti, "that the initiative (to the Conference) was taken by the Berlin Cabinet;" and the Envoys of the Powers at Berlin were instructed to thank the Prussian Government for its successful activity on behalf of peace. We say "Prussian Government," because, though acting in the general interest of the North German Confederation, Bismarck had proposed the Conference as Foreign Minister of Prussia, who was a quasi-party to the Treaty of Paris (1856).

Bismarck had proposed the Cretan Conference because, judging aright the exigencies of the Powers concerned, he foresaw that it would be successful. But he has always shown a singular talent for keeping aloof from enterprises foredoomed to failure, and from Conferences, Congresses, and all the other remedial machinery of modern diplomacy which, in some cases, is only calculated to aggravate the dangers that it is meant to obviate.

Of this class was the European Conference proposed by Napoleon (November, 1867) for settling the Roman question. Louis Napoleon had not long been

rupture between Germany and France, rendered probable by the ambiguous attitude of Napoleon III. They were openly supported by Greece, and patronised by Russia. At the end of a two years' insurrection they were, however, obliged to give in. France had not been able to make up her mind, and kindle a universal conflagration; Russia had failed to settle with France; and Prussia, far from promoting an Oriental crisis, as some Powers thought she would, in order to profit by it for the annexation of Southern Germany, had no wish to extend the sphere of her influence, and exerted herself for the consolidation of peace."—*Times* Correspondent.

menaced out of Mexico, and diplomatised out of Luxemburg, when, from his inveterate habit of putting his finger into every man's pie, he suddenly found himself in possession of Rome. The Roman question.

Rome—that is, the Eternal City and the surrounding Papal ground—was now the only part of the Peninsula wanting to complete the work of Italian unity; and for the completion of that work the Italian people sighed with a longing for political oneness which even the Germans had never felt. But, alas! the horizon of their ardent hopes was bounded by the so-called September Convention (concluded 1864). By this treaty France undertook to evacuate the Papal territory, which a series of events, that need not be detailed, had brought her there to protect; while Victor Emmanuel agreed not to make, nor allow to be made, any attack on the last sad relic of the Pope's temporal power. But the acquisition of Venetia (1866) had whetted the nation's desire for perfect unity, and in the following year this impulse of the people—which could not be repressed, if, indeed, it was not covertly encouraged by their treaty-bound Ruler—found expression in Garibaldi's ill-timed and disastrous expedition that ended at Mentana. The hermit-hero of Caprera was disavowed by the Government which was not beyond the suspicion of having egged him on to unfurl the national flag; but Napoleon, at any rate, looked upon his expedition as a distinct breach of the September Convention—a breach which he avenged by the blood of the misguided Red-Shirts, and by re-entering into possession of the city of the Cæsars. But what was he

to do with Rome, now that he was again in it as the champion of a Power already tottering to its base, and doomed by the eternal decrees of Heaven to pass away? Consult Europe? Consult Prussia?

Prussia's attitude to it.

While as yet Garibaldi's expedition was in progress, Bismarck had replied to the request of Count Usedom, Prussian Minister at Florence, for instructions as to the attitude he should observe to the unity movement in Italy; and his despatch was a masterpiece of that sage caution, in the sense of which he had already met the private inquiries both of Garibaldi and the King of Italy.* The supersession of the Ricasoli by a Ratazzi Cabinet, he said, had introduced an uncertain element into the relations between Italy and Prussia, and Prussia was a Power that could only act after a "clear survey of the political chess-board." Sincerely sympathising, as he did, with the unity movement in Italy, he thought it would be unwise to furnish France with a more plausible pretext for a quarrel with Germany than the completion of the latter's unity; in addition to which the Catholics

* Bismarck admitted to M. Benedetti ("*Ma Mission en Prusse*," p. 246) what, indeed, can be gathered from his despatch to Count Usedom, that he had been sounded on the subject of a possible attack on Rome both by an emissary of Garibaldi, and by the Cabinet of Florence through its Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin. Seeing that M. de Bismarck is never indiscreet without a purpose, why, reasons M. Benedetti, did he reveal these facts? Was it to reduce to a standard of his own convenience the information which the French Government might procure from some other quarter? Or was it merely to show how Italian parties hastened to seek advice in Berlin, and how easy it would be for Prussia to find an ally beyond the Alps? These were engrossing subjects of speculation for sharp-witted M. Benedetti.

of Germany, who could not but be estranged at seeing Prussia making common cause with Italy against the chief of their Church, were entitled to the same tender consideration as Protestants.

But though Bismarck could not see his way to help the Garibaldians in expropriating the Pope and evicting the French from Rome, he equally refused to be a party to a European sanction of their continued presence in that city, or to the permanent exclusion of the Italians from it; for this was simply what Napoleon aimed at by asking the Powers to meet and discuss the Roman question. Was not M. Rouher to utter his famous "*jamais!*" and vow that France would *never* permit Italy to take Rome? What was the use of a Conference, if this was the only decision it was to register? A settlement of this kind, Bismarck foresaw, was no settlement at all, but only a postponement of the solution which no Conference on earth could obviate, and which he himself —though yet unable to look so far into the future—was destined to furnish at Sedan.

M. Rouher's "*jamais!*"

Besides, it was certainly not in the interest of Prussia to assist in relieving Napoleon from his Italian embarrassments, and thus make him free to act, as occasion prompted, against Germany. There was, indeed, reason to believe that Napoleon had approached Victor Emmanuel with proposals of an anti-German alliance; yet the occupation of Rome by French troops would not only explode this coalition, but also hamper the Emperor's

Bismarck declines a Conference, and why.

freedom of action on the Rhine. This, of course, suited the unity policy of Bismarck to perfection, and nothing would induce him to accept the French invitation to a Conference. It is true, he based his repeated refusals on merely formal grounds, but the above were beyond all doubt his true reasons, as M. Benedetti himself was acute enough to discern;* and the German Press, without distinction, heartily approved his reserve. M. Benedetti believed that, not content with declining the Conference himself, Bismarck did all he could to induce other Powers to do the same;† but it is certain, at least, that he severely reprimanded Hesse-Darmstadt for having accepted Napoleon's invitation without previously consulting the Government of the North German Confederacy, of which, for part of its territory, it was a member.

Thousands of Prussian Catholics had petitioned King William to protect the independence of the Pope, and His Majesty himself was said to be in favour of the Conference; but his Prime Minister, on this as on many other points of difference between him and his master, had his own way. "If I am not mistaken," wrote

* M. Benedetti's despatches to his Government on Bismarck's attitude to the Roman question are charming specimens of clear, subtle, and sagacious reasoning set off by an elegant style. See "*Ma Mission en Prusse*," *sub* "*Rapports de la France avec la Prusse de* 1866 *d* 1870."

† "Les entretiens que j'ai eus avec lui à ce sujet m'ont prouvé surabondamment que, loin de seconder nos demandes, il s'est activement employé, tant à Florence qu'à Londres et à Saint-Petersbourg, à faire échouer la combinaison que nous avions suggérée dans une pensée d'apaisement et de conciliation. Son unique dessin consistait à nous retenir à Civita-Vecchia, sinon à Rome. . . . pour neutraliser, en un mot, notre liberté sur le Rhin."—*Idem*, p. 260.

M. Benedetti, "I am assisting at something analogous —I will not say identical—to the spectacle presented by the Prussian Government at Berlin during the months preceding the war with Austria" (when it cost Bismarck "such frightful struggles" to break the will of the King). In common with many around His Majesty, M. Benedetti thought that, in declining the Conference, Bismarck was spurning a means of conciliating the goodwill of the Emperor, and of allaying the resentments aroused in France at the successes of Prussia.

But why did Bismarck fail to profit by this golden opportunity? Was it because he had become convinced of the utter hopelessness of ever conciliating France, of the certainty of war, and of the imperious necessity of his taking every precaution in time to break the force of the inevitable blow? There is, indeed, only too much reason to believe that he shared the conviction of the nation, that a conflict between the two countries was only a question of time. In France this belief was equally firm, but there it was generally expected that aggression would come from Germany. M. Benedetti, on the other hand, who had better means of judging than any of his countrymen, was "profoundly convinced" that it was not Bismarck's object to attack France. "On the contrary, his chief pre-occupation, if I mistake not, is to avoid a conflict with us; but he feels that the policy he is pursuing in Germany may bring about one, and all his calculations are subordinate

One bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

to this grave eventuality." Thus it was that he would do nothing to remove the seeds of estrangement between France and Italy; thus it was that he did everything in his power to conciliate the favour of Russia;* thus it was that, in order to assure himself of the sympathy of the American people, he emerged from his strict social seclusion to propose the health of President Grant at a banquet given by the United States Minister in honour of the General's accession to office;† and thus it was that when, in the spring of 1868, "with the view of improving our relations with Prussia," Prince Napoleon went to Berlin to propose a concerted policy in the East, Bismarck gave him clearly to understand that he would prefer to maintain a passive attitude. He was anxious to conciliate the French, but—one bird in the hand being worth two in the bush—not at the risk of forfeiting the securities he had created at Florence and St. Petersburg.

Napoleon knew that the passage of the Main was inevitable—impending; so the grand and all-engrossing question for him was whether to accept accomplished facts, or prevent their accomplishment at the point of

* Bismarck's pacific intervention in the Cretan quarrel was but one of many acts aiming at binding Russia to Germany.

† M. Benedetti thought it worth while to report this incident to his Government: "On remarque cependant qu'il (Bismarck) ne perd aucune occasion de témoigner de son désir de se concilier les sympathies des puissances dont le concours pourrait lui être éventuellement utile. Je ne rappellerai pas les ménagements que l'on a pour la Russie; j'en ai trop souvent entretenu le département; mais je noterai que M. de Bismarck, qui ne se montre nulle part, a consenti à assister à un banquet du Ministre des Etats-Unis, et qu'il y a porté un toast au général Grant, qu'on s'est hâté de faire reproduire par tous les journaux" (p. 282).

the sword. There is nothing to show that the Emperor ever came to a frank and clear decision on the subject; but one thing certain is that he never caused it to be said, in so many simple and reassuring words, at Berlin: "Do what you like with Germany—France will not seek to interfere with your affairs." Once, indeed, he did make public use of some ambiguous phraseology of this kind, but the effect was countervailed by the harangues of senators and deputies, who indulged in most bellicose and defiant language.* Bismarck was not unwilling to credit the Emperor with sense and moderation; but he knew that, just as he himself could not now, even if he would, stem the national tide in Germany, so Napoleon was not wholly master of his own will, and in all probability would have to yield to that public opinion of which he was the creature. And how that public opinion felt, there was not the slightest doubt.

Ambiguous attitude of Napoleon.

"Were we only to judge from appearances," wrote a Berlin journal of moderate tone,† "we should say that France had been converted into a desert inhabited by bloodthirsty animals. The only sounds penetrating to us from the other side of the frontier are like the tiger's roar and the jackal's howl, eager for prey. Blood, blood! is the echo incessantly wafted towards us from those dens of ferocity. And why all this noise? why this cruel and malicious yearning for war, razzia, and destruction? Why this apparent obtuseness to the primary teachings of morality and reason? Because the German nation has chosen to alter its Constitution. Because it declares that

Public opinion in France.

* At the opening of the Chambers, November, 1867.

† The *National Zeitung*, September, 1868.

now, as at the time of its former institutions, it desires to live in peace and amity with its Western neighbours. Because it is slow to take offence, and declines to be irritated by the absurd accusation of contemplating the ruin of France. The behaviour of French writers is unprecedented among civilised nations, and we are tempted to ask whether, by some magical spell, we have not been transported back a thousand years. Since Christianity existed, such a scandal has not occurred among Christians. While the Germans are perhaps the only people in the world who would submit to it, there are certainly none but Frenchmen who would offer such insolent provocation. To what wrath would the English and Spaniards be roused, were a portion of their territory, every now and then claimed by the swaggering and impudent journalists of France! As it is, we must trust to the sensible and respectable among our volatile neighbours, gagged though they be, to modify the effect produced by the infamous braggadocios in their midst. Our mutual relations depend on the success of their endeavours."

We have quoted this passage because, high-pitched though it be, nothing could better describe the tone of a very large section of the French Press towards Germany in the interval between 1866 and 1870. It is true, this Press did not exactly reflect the mind of the Government, but it conveyed the sentiments of no inconsiderable part of the population, whose will might prove to be stronger even than that of their rulers. Germany, in fact, could not mind her business, nor tranquilly sleep, nor eat her food in peace, for the incessant sabre-rattling of France. Industry languished, the minds of men were depressed, and emigration increased to an alarming extent. The relations of France and Germany, and the prospects of a war, formed the great topic of the time. Every country almost in Europe had

A nightmare of European questions.

its question. There was the Polish question, the Eastern question, the Fenian question, the Roman question, the North-Schleswig question, and the question of dualism and federalism in Austria; but the German question was the most engrossing of all, as involving the most momentous issues.

Two great neighbouring nations were organising their forces, and arming to the teeth. French officers secretly overran the Rhineland,* and German draughtsmen were equally busy in the cities and plains of Alsace-Lorraine. General Ducrot, commanding at Strasburg, indulged in an ostentatious survey of the Baden side of the river; while Count Moltke,† in the spring of 1868, made a careful inspection of the French frontier, and in the winter of the same year drew up a complete plan for the contingent invasion of France. At Chalons, Napoleon was repeatedly greeted by his troops with cries of "*Au Rhin!*" and "*Vive la Guerre!*"—while to such provocations King William would publicly reply

Mutual espionage.

* The Baden Government issued orders enjoining the immediate arrest of all people found sketching in the fields.

† Moltke was watchfully followed throughout his strategical tour of survey by a French officer, Captain Samuel, who reported to Paris that the General had visited Saarbrück and Saarlouis, and was about to descend the Moselle. In his letter (9th April, 1868), Samuel inquired whether it was the wish of the Minister that Moltke should be followed further. "*Suivez-le,*" was the answer. (Jerrold's "Life of Napoleon III.," Vol. IV., p. 452.) "A detailed plan for the collection of all the German forces in the event of a war with France, and for the placing in position, etc., of the component parts of the army—this we find drawn up in a memorandum of the Prussian General Staff, dating from the winter of 1868-69." (Official History of the Franco-German War by the Grand General Staff.)

by a reference to the readiness and willingness of his army to accept challenges wantonly forced upon it.*

Such were a few of the symptoms which characterised the relations of the two nations, and kept them perpetually on edge. Bismarck, on his part, sedulously avoided everything that might give umbrage to France; but none the less did he keep in view the realisation of his great life-task. He would wait until the South, of its own free will, came and offered its heart and hand to the North, but he would wait no longer, come what might of it. Meanwhile the Southern States showed no great inclination to hasten the achievement of the "*ganzes Deutschland*" sung by the soldier-poet, Moritz Arndt,† and the state of almost unendurable tension continued. Napoleon, on his part, had gradually come to the conclusion that his dynasty, which rested on the pillars of a popular favour that was beginning to show itself fickle, could only be consolidated by a war with Prussia, or by his courting an alliance with the Sovereign of an united Germany. But, irresolute as Hamlet, he could not make his choice; and meanwhile he remained the victim of that habit of conspiracy which, as it had been the instrument of his elevation to the Imperial throne, he hoped would also serve to maintain him on it.‡

Waiting and watching.

* This the King did in replying to a loyal address from the Professors of Kiel, in September, 1868.

† "*Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland*," &c.

‡ One who had excellent opportunities of judging Napoleon thus wrote of him: "A singular peculiarity of the Emperor was, so to say, the

Bismarck, on the other hand, while careful not to provoke a rupture, remained as firm as Napoleon was irresolute; and when the latter, in a fit of irresolution, broached in Berlin the question of mutual disarmament, he was given to understand that in no circumstances could Prussia thus expose herself to become the plaything of fortune. The feeling, indeed, of the country on this subject had been clearly shown in the preceding autumn (1869), when the disarmament motion of an ill-advised deputy * in the Prussian Chamber was rejected by a sweeping majority. But, though the enormous armaments of the nation were a fearful drain on its exchequer, it did not shrink from further financial sacrifices in the interest of its security, as the following incident showed.

Disarmament out of the question.

By his attitude to the Roman question, Bismarck had shown that it was not the interest of Germany to act as mediator between France and Italy; and now there occurred an opportunity of drawing Italy altogether away from France, and binding her to Germany—literally with bonds of iron and with hoops of steel. Unfortu-

The faith that removes mountains.

impulse to conspire, which had become to him a second nature . . . . . He conspired with deputies against ministers, with one minister against another, with one party against another, with one European Power against another, and he also conspired in the cause of King George of Hanover." —"Sketches from the time of the Second Empire," in Vol. III. of "*Memoiren zur Zeitgeschichte*," by Oscar Meding ("Gregor Samaroff"), whilom confidant of the King of Hanover.

* Professor Virchow, whose motion was traceable to the influence of Mr. Henry Richard, an English M.P., who had gone to Berlin to interest political circles in the cause of general disarmament.

nately for the prospects of perfect intercourse between the two countries, Germany and Italy were separated by what, for all practical purposes, was an impassable barrier—the Alps. It is true, these mountains were now penetrated by two railway-lines — the Brenner and the Mont-Cénis tunnels; but, in order to avail themselves of either of these routes, German traders and travellers had first to pass through Austria or through France; and circumstances, thought Bismarck, might arise when it would be impossible or oppressive for them to do either. "A way into Italy," remarked an eloquent writer,* "never failed to be an object of interest to every man or woman, from the rude Teutonic invader attracted by the fame of the luscious figs and grapes of that southern land, to the blooming English bride anxious to enjoy her honeymoon indulgences, and parade her nuptial finery at the Cascine or the Pincio." But to Bismarck, a way into Italy was an object of very special political interest.

The Brenner and the Mont-Cénis lines had not long been completed when it was proposed to construct a third railway through the Alps; but the Swiss cantons, guided by local interests, were divided as to the proposed route, some advocating the Splügen, and others the St. Gothard Pass. Appealed to for help, and looking at the plan with the eyes of a politician, a strategist, and a man of commerce, Bismarck was quick to per-

Germany subsidises the St. Gothard Tunnel.

* *The Times* Special Correspondent at the opening of the St. Gothard Tunnel, in May, 1882.

ceive the immense advantages that would accrue to Germany from being united to Italy by a direct travelling and trading route—direct, at least, in this sense, that it would avoid both France and Austria, and only traverse neutral Switzerland; but he made the participation of Germany in the enterprise conditional on the question of the two rival routes being settled in favour of the St. Gothard. Settled, accordingly, in this sense it promptly was, both by Italy and Switzerland; and a preliminary Convention was signed, by which North Germany undertook to contribute ten million francs to the expense of boring the tunnel. This Convention was approved by the Reichstag almost unanimously (26th May, 1870), after Bismarck had dwelt on the cogency of the political and other reasons which induced the Government to make such a pecuniary sacrifice on behalf of an enterprise not only outside the Confederation, but outside Germany. It was, indeed, an act of an unprecedented kind, and not altogether untinged with a dash of that idealism which forms so marked a feature in the German character. It was an act of splendid boldness, of far-seeing wisdom, and one which entitles Bismarck, among his other honours, to be regarded as the main author of one of the most magnificent triumphs of modern science.

On the brink of the precipice, but not over it.

But it was also an act that all but precipitated the conflict which nervous Europe had been expecting for the last four years. The displeasure occasioned in France by Bismarck's daring policy was inversely proportionate to the

satisfaction with which it had been hailed in Germany. The moderate speech with which he had dwelt on the wisdom and the necessity of cultivating close relations with Italy, was denounced by the Chauvinists as a provocation to France. In the Chamber the Government was angrily interpellated as to the Convention between Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, which was described as highly detrimental to the interests of the Empire ; the Paris Press again blazed up with a recrudescence of that anti-Prussian fury which had of late burned with a milder flame; and there is no saying but that an international work of peace might then and there have been twisted into a pretext for an internecine war, had there not at this juncture occurred an incident that was eagerly seized upon as a more plausible reason for that inevitable rupture between two mighty nations which had so long been ripening in the womb of time.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR.

On the 30th June, 1870, M. Ollivier, Chief of the French Cabinet, publicly declared that "at no time was the preservation of peace so assured as at present."

In less than a fortnight from this date France had resolved to declare war against Germany.

What had brought about this sudden and terrible change? and of whose forging was this stupefying bolt out of the blue? A bolt out of the blue.

Dismissed to their homes, with reassuring words from King William, on the day (26th May) they had voted the St. Gothard subsidy, the members of the North German Parliament were courting supine the afternoon shade of their orchards, and pondering the means by which the Main might at last be peacefully bridged. The ironclad fleet of the Confederation had sailed away on a summer cruise; a large number of officers had received leave of absence till the usual autumn manœuvres. Count Moltke was cultivating the roses on his Silesian estate; King William, in blithe holiday mood, was drinking the waters at Ems—that charming summer-retreat in the picturesque valley of the Lahn, not far from the birthplace of Stein, the

Regenerator of Prussia; and Count Bismarck was trying to restore his shattered health—shattered by more than the labours of a Hercules—among the woods and moors of Varzin, a lordship, or lairdship, in the wilds of Pomerania, which he had purchased in 1867 out of the dotation bestowed upon him by a grateful country.

Bismarck in Ems.

Bismarck, we say, was at Varzin; but he, too, had lately been with the King in Ems, though he had otherwise not accompanied his master on any such trip since 1865, when he went to Gastein. And what, then, took him to Ems? Overshadowed by succeeding events, the incident has been less remembered than it ought to be. On June 2nd King William repaired to Ems to return the visit which the Czar, his nephew, had paid him shortly before at Berlin. This was etiquette, but the meeting could hardly have been dictated by etiquette alone. For in the suite of Alexander II. was M. d'Oubril, his Ambassador at Berlin; while in that of King William was his Chancellor.

King William and the Czar.

That there were political conferences between the Sovereigns, and between their servants, is certain. What was discussed is still matter of conjecture, but the general object of the interview was plain enough then to the seeing eye, and was shortly afterwards made plain even to the most short-sighted. In the previous winter the Czar and his royal uncle had indulged in an exchange of decorations and of effusive assurances of friendship, which were justly regarded as a reply to certain French attempts to sow dissension

between the Courts of Berlin and St. Petersburg; and now the meeting at Ems was rightly interpreted as a means of reassuring the German nation as to the attitude of Russia in the event of a war with France. Both Sovereigns may have come to look on that war as almost inevitable, but neither of them had the slightest notion that it was so appallingly near.

And yet it cannot be doubted that their meeting must be reckoned as one of the causes which precipitated the struggle. It was well known to Napoleon that the chief aim of Bismarck's foreign policy, for the last four years, had been to isolate France, to deprive her of possible allies against Germany. With Italy this policy had succeeded, and French chagrin at its success had found peevish vent when there was certain prospect of the two nations being bound together with veritable "hasps of iron, and with hoops of steel." It was now equally clear to the French nation that Bismarck had compassed his purpose with respect to Russia, and the malicious rage of the French nation against the rising Power that threatened to dispute its traditional queenship of the Continent became all the more deep as it felt its fury to be impotent. "You accurséd head of Germany, you have been prospering in the world lately, and I have not . . ."*—such was now the uppermost thought in the Napoleonic mind, and the Napoleonic mind only reflected the feelings of the French nation. Representing the accumulated hatred, jealousy, defeats and disappoint-

Causes of the Franco-German war; isolation of France.

* Carlyle's Letter to *The Times* on the Franco-German War.

ments of half-a-dozen years, these feelings had now at last taken the form of a pile of explosive powder which only waited for the touch of fire; and lo! the Diabolic Genius of History was swift to approach with a flaming brand.

The Crown of Spain.

This brand was flung on the 4th of July by the *Constitutionnel*, which, while revealing the fact that the Crown of Spain had been offered to, and accepted by, Leopold of Hohenzollern, expressed "surprise that the sceptre of Charles V. should be conferred on a Prussian Prince." On the same day, the French Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin asked Bismarck's substitute (for the Chancellor himself had returned to Varzin from Ems)* whether the astounding news was true. "The Prussian Government," was the reply, "knows absolutely nothing of the affair, which does not exist for it." On this date also the Duc de Gramont, Napoleon's Foreign Minister, sent for Baron Werther, the Prussian Ambassador, who was about to visit the King at Ems, and begged him to tell His Majesty of the very bad impression produced in Paris, and indeed throughout France, by the Spanish candidature of Prince Leopold, and to entreat His Majesty to induce the Prince to withdraw on pain of a "catastrophe." "Do you mean by 'catastrophe' a threat of war?" asked the dumbfounded Ambassador. "*Oui*," replied M. Ollivier, who four days previously had pronounced the political horizon to be speckless; "*oui, il y a menace de guerre.*"

* On the 5th June, King William and his Chancellor returned to Berlin from Ems, where they had met the Czar—Bismarck to retire to Varzin, and His Majesty to go back to Ems on the 20th to continue his "cure."

Before an answer could possibly have been returned from Ems to his quasi-ultimatum, the Duc de Gramont (on the 6th) added fuel to the flames that had already seized hold of the French mind by replying to an interpellation in the Legislative Body, which there is every reason to believe he himself had prompted. With all respect, he said—and his speech was received with frantic applause—for the rights of a neighbouring people (Spain), France was not bound to sit still and behold a foreign Power (Prussia) deranging the equilibrium of Europe to her own advantage, by placing one of her Princes on the throne of Charles V. "As for the Prince," wrote the Duc de Gramont to M. Benedetti next day (the 7th), "his reign in Spain will not last a month; but how long will last the war provoked by *this intrigue of M. de Bismarck*, and what will be its results?"

A threat of war.

Now, in what sense was Leopold of Hohenzollern a Prussian Prince? And to what extent was his candidature for the throne of Spain an "intrigue of M. de Bismarck?"

In none but an antiquarian sense, and scarcely even in that, was Prince Leopold a member of the royal family of Prussia. Belonging to the Sigmaringen and Catholic branch of the Hohenzollern race, he was only related to the King of Prussia through a very remote common ancestor; but even the establishment of this relationship was a genealogical problem of extreme stiffness. As far, indeed, as blood went, he had closer affinity with the

Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern.

Imperial dynasty of France than with the royal family of Prussia. For his paternal grandmother was Princess Antoinette Murat, while his mother was a daughter of the Grand Duchess Stephanie of Baden, sister of Hortense Beauharnais, the mother of Napoleon III. His wife was a sister of the King of Portugal. Dynastically, therefore, Prince Leopold actually stood nearer the French than the Prussian throne; but, on the other hand, it cannot be doubted that he lived more under the influence of the King of Prussia than of the Emperor of the French. His father, the Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, had, in 1849, with the desire to promote German unity, abdicated in favour of the King of Prussia. He regarded King William as the patriarch of his race; he held the rank of colonel in the Prussian army; one of his brothers had fallen while leading on a company of the Prussian Guards at Königgrätz;* he spent much of his time at the Court of Berlin, and his political sympathies were with the German movement of the time.

It was, therefore, only natural that, when the French heard of Leopold being put forward as a candidate for the Spanish throne, they should have cried out against him as being more of a Prussian than a Bonapartist Prince. It was only natural also that, believing him to

* The Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen had four sons: Prince Leopold, who was put up as a candidate for the Spanish throne; Prince Charles, who became King of Roumania; Prince Anthony, who was killed at Königgrätz, and Prince Frederick, who holds a commission in the Prussian Dragoon Guards. His only daughter was married to the Comte de Flandre, brother (and heir presumptive) of the King of the Belgians.

be such, they should have objected to his swaying, on their southern frontier, what they called the "sceptre of Charles V." The principle which they sought to enforce was neither novel nor inequitable, and, as pointed out in a circular despatch by the Duc de Gramont,* it was only that which had been vindicated by the Great Powers when the Duc de Nemours was nominated King of the Belgians; by France and Russia, in 1862, when Prince Alfred of England was chosen King of the Hellenes; as well as by England and France when Russia proposed the Duke of Leuchtenberg for the same throne; and again by Napoleon III. himself when Prince Murat was nominated to the Crown of Naples.

French objection to his candidature.

In the candidature of Prince Leopold for the throne of Spain, the French Government and nation naturally enough beheld a source of considerable detriment to the interests of France, but they also jumped to the conclusion that this detriment had been craftily and maliciously devised for them by Count Bismarck. This was what filled them with blind fury, this it was that almost deprived them of their reason. Pre-disposed, as they were at this particular time, to believe everything that was evil of King William's Premier, the French people lent a ready ear to the assertion of their rulers that they were being made the victims of a far-reaching and infamous intrigue. Now, to what extent was this true? A question which is almost tantamount to—

* Circular Despatch to the Representatives of France abroad, dated July 9, 1870.

Who was responsible for the Franco-German war? Was it Bismarck, or was it Napoleon?

Where tangible facts are not to hand, the historian must supply the want by cautious reasoning from analogy. Did Bismarck foresee that his work could not possibly be completed without a war with France; and did he, as it might plausibly be shown he did in 1866 with Austria, precipitate this struggle, while yet contriving to make it appear as if provocation wholly came from the other side?* We wish to be guided by the spirit of strict impartiality in examining this question. We are far from seeking to deny that the aggressive element in the complex character of the German Chancellor is none the less large, because circumstances often allow it to be latent. We know that, shortly before the "first shots fell" in 1866, he tried as a last resource to obviate that war, in deference to the wishes of the King, by proposing an Austro-Prussian dualism in Germany, and an Austro-Prussian alliance against France for the re-conquest of Alsace.† Might he not, therefore, have cast about to

Was the candidature an intrigue of Bismarck?

* We were told by an ambassador at Berlin that he once heard Bismarck exclaim in a moment of warmth, "Oh! I have had experience enough in making other countries declare war against Germany."

† This astounding fact was first authentically revealed in the spring of 1884 by Dr. Busch in his "*Unser Reichskanzler*" (Our Chancellor), Vol. I., p. 422 (German edition). "About a fortnight," says Dr. Busch, "before the declaration of war in 1866 against Austria, Bismarck caused a proposition to be made to the Emperor Francis Joseph, by which Austria and Prussia —the former taking the command of all the troops in South Germany, the latter of all the troops in North Germany— should unite their forces and declare war against France. The political object of the war was to be the consolidation of Germany under the joint leadership of Prussia and Austria, intimately allied; the military object, the re-conquest of Alsace

accomplish, in 1870, what he vainly proposed to achieve in 1866?

Those who hold—as there may be some who hold—that the candidature of Prince Leopold was a Prussian intrigue against France, are reduced to the choice of two suppositions: first, either that Bismarck privately encouraged the Prince to accept the proffered crown in the hope of thus increasing the number of Germany's allies, of isolating France, and thus rendering her less likely to break the peace; or, secondly, that he did so of set and secret purpose to ripen a long-standing quarrel, insupportable in its immaturity. Now, what evidence is there that he did either of these two things?

It was the conviction of the astute M. Benedetti—whose judgment, however, may have been distorted by the smarting pain of the many diplomatic defeats he had suffered at the hands of Bismarck—that the latter was "on the outlook for advantages to his German policy from the vacancy of the throne of Spain."*

for Germany as a whole. France, according to Prince Bismarck, was unprepared for war; and as France two hundred years before had taken Strasburg by surprise, so Germany, he argued, might fairly re-take it by the same means."

This revelation, when made, caused no slight sensation in Germany (though, strange to say, very little in France), and several journals—over-anxious probably for the political reputation of the Chancellor—hastened to deny the accuracy of Dr. Busch's statement. Dr. Busch replied that his assertion was "drawn word for word from the best conceivable source" (which could only mean the Chancellor himself); while the Chancellor's personal organ, the *Nord-Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (18th February, 1884) promptly backed up Dr. Busch by declaring all rectifications (of his assertion) to be wrong, and the assertion itself to be "materially right."

* "Ma Mission en Prusse," p. 312.

Bismarck had conciliated Russia, as well as captivated Italy; and then, argued M. Benedetti, he set about trying to increase the number of his alliances by cultivating close relations with Spain. How? "By placing a Prussian Prince on her throne."

Its origin and history.

Suspecting, rightly or wrongly, that such a scheme formed part of the combinations of the German Chancellor, M. Benedetti questioned him upon the subject so early as the spring of 1869. Shortly before that, the Ambassador had been summoned to Paris to tell the Emperor personally what he knew of the matter, and on this occasion Napoleon said: "The candidature of the Duc de Montpensier is purely anti-dynastic; it only affects me, and I may accept it; but that of the Prince of Hohenzollern is essentially anti-national, the country will not endure it, and it must be prevented."

It was in the sense of these words that M. Benedetti expressed himself on returning to Berlin. We are still speaking of the spring of 1869, so that whatever may have been Bismarck's secret wish or aim with respect to the throne of Spain, he could now have had no doubt as to the feelings with which the candidature of a Hohenzollern Prince would be viewed in Paris. "Without concealing from me," wrote M. Benedetti,* "that he had had occasion to discuss the subject both with the King and Prince Anthony (the father of Leopold), M. de Bismarck took refuge in observations which," to quote the Duc de Gramont, "amounted to a declaration that

* "Ma Mission en Prusse," p. 308.

we had no reason to trouble ourselves about a combination he himself deemed to be unrealisable."* M. Benedetti left Bismarck with the impression that the latter had not been perfectly frank with him; and "he carefully refrained from giving me the formal assurance that the King would not, in any case, permit Prince Leopold to accept the crown if offered to him."

This was in May, 1869; and by the beginning of July, 1870, Prince Leopold had been offered, and had accepted, the Spanish Crown (subject to the approval of the Cortes), after it had vainly gone a-begging for some time among several other ineligible candidates. The negotiations between Marshal Prim and the Prince were conducted with so much secrecy that their result came upon the world, especially upon France, as a decided surprise; but, it must be said, there is nothing whatever to show that these negotiations were due to the initiative of Bismarck. All the balance of evidence, indeed, is the other way. "Oh," said the French Ambassador at Madrid to Marshal Prim, on being informed by the latter of the *fait accompli*, "Oh, I have noted well for some time back that M. de Bismarck has been trying to meddle with your affairs. . . ." "You are mistaken," replied the Regent, "the overtures originated here." "You will contradict the statement," telegraphed the Minister of State at Madrid to the Spanish Ambassador at Paris, "that General Prim has applied to Count Bismarck in order to obtain the consent of the King of Prussia. The negotiations were exclusively with Prince

* Circular Despatch of 21st July, 1870.

Leopold, without our entering into any relations whatever on the subject with Count Bismarck."*

Was Bismarck, then, completely ignorant of what was going on? No. We have his own confession that he was made aware of the transaction by "a private person concerned."† Was it not his duty, then, to point out to the King the effect which Prince Leopold's acceptance of the Spanish Crown would be sure to have on the French mind, seeing that his conversation with M. Benedetti in May, 1869, must have left him in no doubt on the subject? We do not know, but we are bound to remember that an act of policy may present itself to different minds in different lights, and that, of two spectators looking along the same plane, one may see much further than the other. In the case of King William and his Chancellor, this has frequently proved true; but whether it was true with reference to the Spanish Crown incident, is a question which can only be answered by evidence that is wanting.

Being left to his own judgment in the matter, or perhaps even trusting his judgment all the more that it

* In his "Life of Napoleon III." (Vol. IV., p. 456), Mr. Jerrold writes: "The course adopted was, in short, to wait the turn of events, and to spring this mine in France if it should appear at any moment to give the reason for an opportune rupture. *Early in May*, 1870, *M. de Bismarck signified to Marshal Prim that the moment for the declaration of the Hohenzollern candidature was coming. The King would offer no objection. Prince Leopold was ready.*" This would all be very interesting and to the point—*if true*—but unfortunately Mr. Jerrold fails to give his authority for this statement. We are utterly unable to understand how any writer, claiming to be serious and reasonable, can calmly make such assertions as the above without furnishing his readers with the slightest vestige of evidence in support.

† Circular Despatch of 18th July, 1870.

coincided with the opinion of his Chancellor, King William saw no reason why he should oppose himself to the inclination of Prince Leopold when the latter, having decided to accept the Spanish offer, came to Ems to intimate the fact as an act of courtesy due to the monarch, or rather the man, whom he regarded as the head of his family.* But His Majesty expressly avowed —and the word of such a pattern King is altogether beyond suspicion—that "he had never encouraged the Prince to accept the overtures of the Spanish Cabinet,"† and that he had not been privy to the negotiations. As far, therefore, as King William himself is concerned, the French charge, that the "candidature of Prince Leopold was a Prussian intrigue," must be dismissed as utterly baseless. That, on the other hand, there was intriguing on the part of Bismarck, is a theory which must assume that, though the initiative in the matter of the Hohenzollern candidature did not proceed from Berlin but from Madrid, he was quick to perceive the end to which it might be turned; and that, in pursuance of this end, he assumed a passive attitude, allowing the King to choose a course which, had His Majesty been gifted with the commanding vision of his Minister in addition to his own pacific sentiments, he would assuredly have shrunk from adopting.

* Once during the war resulting from the Spanish incident, Bismarck asked about the Prince of Hohenzollern, who was with his regiment, "Is he a soldier, or merely a Prince?" The answer being favourable, the Chancellor replied, "I was delighted with his first reporting his election as King of Spain officially to his commander."—Dr. Busch.

† "Ma Mission en Prusse," p. 333.

Fury of the French.

This, we say, is the assumption on the truth of which must depend the theory that the candidature of Prince Leopold was an "intrigue of Count Bismarck;" but it was an assumption about which the French did not much trouble their heads. In no mood for weighing evidence, they rushed to the conclusion that they had been made the victims of a vile Prussian conspiracy, and their rage knew no bounds. "Insulted again by Monsieur de Bismarck," resounded in the lobbies of the Legislative Body, resounded all through the nation, till the echoes reached the ears of all the European Governments; and the blustering Duc de Gramont braced himself up to the congenial task of demanding immediate satisfaction for the affront thus put upon unoffending France.

"Go to Ems. An *attaché* whom I shall send off early to-morrow morning will bring you instructions there . . . Tell the station-master where you put up."

The war prelude at Ems; King William and M. Benedetti.

Such was the peremptory telegram sent on 7th July by Gramont to Benedetti at Wildbad, a summer-resort in Würtemberg, where the French Ambassador was not only taking the waters (recommended for gout and rheumatism), but also, according to some authorities, trying to tamper with the treaty-loyalty of the South to the North.* To Ems, accordingly, nimble M. Benedetti gladly flew; all the faster, perhaps, as thinking he might achieve an easy diplomatic victory over King

* "The Franco-German War," by Colonel Borbstaedt and Major Dwyer, p. 81

William before Bismarck, his invincible man-at-arms, could rush down to the rescue from his far-off Pomeranian retreat.

"Oh," said the King, when M. Benedetti was ushered into his presence on the 9th; "I know what you have come about; but we shall not quarrel over the Hohenzollern candidature."* The French Ambassador may have had his own doubts on this head; but meanwhile he gave the King to understand that, unless His Majesty "counselled," or "induced," or, indeed, "commanded" Prince Leopold to revoke his acceptance of the Spanish Crown, there could only be one result of the incident—and that result was war.

Amazed, His Majesty replied that, in all he had done in the matter, he had acted, not as a King, but as a patriarch—a distinction which M. Benedetti refused to admit; that his Government had carefully stood aloof from the whole business; that he himself, as King of Prussia, had even declined to receive the bearer of a missive from Marshal Prim; that he had only consented to give his opinion as head of the Hohenzollern family when appealed to by Prince Leopold, and that even then he limited himself to saying that he saw no reason to oppose the manifest wish of his kinsman; but that, nevertheless, if the Prince, in view of the bellicose commotion excited in France by his candidature, was disposed to withdraw it, he would approve his resolution.

* "*Politische Geschichte der Gegenwart*," 1870. When not otherwise specified, our narrative of the incident at Ems is mainly based on M. Benedetti's despatches to his Government, given in his "*Ma Mission en Prusse.*"

"And meanwhile," said the King in substance, "you must wait till I have a reply from Prince Leopold and his father to my inquiries on the subject."

Rightly judging the language of the pacific King, M. Benedetti concluded that he had resolved to "agree to our demands;" and that, in seeking this delay, His Majesty merely wished to save appearances by leaving the initiative of retreat to Prince Leopold himself. But the other hypothesis which presented itself to the mind of the Ambassador, that it might after all be merely a ruse to gain time, was eagerly preferred at Paris.

"Do everything you can to get a decisive answer," telegraphed the importunate Duc de Gramont, in reply to Benedetti's report. "We cannot wait at the risk of being outdone by Prussia in our (war) preparations."

And again, with furious haste, five minutes later :—

"Write me a despatch that I can read to the Chambers, or publish, wherein you show that the King knew of and authorised the Prince of Hohenzollern's acceptance (of the Spanish Crown); and in particular say that he (the King) requested a delay in order that he might concert with the Prince before imparting to you his decision."

Here was a Foreign Minister who was evidently master of the art of manufacturing and manipulating public opinion; and public opinion, thus manipulated, began to clamour, shriek, and bellow for immediate action. Meanwhile, poor M. Benedetti knew not what to do under the stress of the impatient telegrams incessantly flashed from Paris to Ems, commanding,

exhorting, imploring him to wring a decisive reply of some sort from the King.

"I have just met the King," he telegraphed late on the evening of the 10th (the day after his first audience). "His Majesty stopped me to say that he had not yet received any answer from Prince Leopold" (who, being away on an Alpine tour, was not yet back with his father); "and I replied that we were on the brink of the moment when the Emperor's Government could no longer put off the explanations it owed the Chambers and the country."

"You cannot imagine," was the midnight reply to this, "to what degree the flood of public opinion has risen. It inundates us on every side, and we count the hours. You must absolutely insist on obtaining an answer from the King, 'Yes' or 'No.' We want it for to-morrow, next day will be too late."

"I have just left the King," telegraphed M. Benedetti a few hours after receiving the above peremptory message (on the 11th). "During an audience of about an hour I invoked the aid of all imaginable arguments to induce His Majesty to bid me tell you that he will invite the Prince of Hohenzollern to renounce the Crown of Spain, without, however, concealing from him that I should consider this counsel as a command. But the King refused, telling me that he was bound to allow his kinsman the same liberty of action after, as before, his acceptance (of the Crown)."

The day of the 11th passed, and no reply had yet reached the King from Sigmaringen in answer to his inquiry as to how the princely candidate regarded the French demand. The day passed, and the sleep of M. Benedetti was troubled by a complaint from Paris that his language to the King was not sufficiently firm. Next day (the 12th) he was informed by His Majesty that a letter from the Prince would infallibly be in his hands on the morrow; and soon thereafter he was commanded from Paris to "employ every device" to assure

himself of some proof of the participation of the King in the withdrawal of Prince Leopold.

But the King and his counsellors had been too clever for him; for Prince Leopold, or rather his father on his behalf (at the secret suggestion, no doubt, of His Majesty), had already telegraphed to Madrid his renunciation of the Crown; and on the same day the French Government was informed of the fact—*not* through the King of Prussia, as it wished and directed M. Benedetti to use all his ability to bring about—but by the Spanish Ambassador in Paris. To the French mind this was disappointing and mortifying in the extreme; for King William, in his ardent and honest desire to maintain peace, had virtually complied with Napoleon's demand, while making it appear as if Prince Leopold had acted entirely on his own initiative.

But this would not satisfy the ravenous men-wolves of the Boulevards. "Repair at once to the King," telegraphed Gramont to Benedetti at the dictation of the howling men-wolves, "and exact from His Majesty, not only a public approval of the Prince's retirement, but also an engagement that he will never again allow him to stand for the Crown of Spain." This imperious command reached M. Benedetti in the middle of the night, and early in the morning (of the 13th) he hastened to the lodging of the King. But the King had already sallied forth, and the French Ambassador darted off in eager pursuit. Seeing M. Benedetti hurrying along, His Majesty approached him* and, divining his object,

* "*Le roi m'aperçut dans une allée et vint à moi.*"

handed him a newspaper with the tidings that Prince Leopold had withdrawn, while adding that he had not yet himself received direct intelligence from Sigmaringen, but would be sure to do so in the course of the day. His interlocutor observed that he, too, had received from Paris the news of the Prince's retirement; whereupon the King remarked, with a complacent smile, that he supposed the matter was now settled to the satisfaction of every one. "Settled, your Majesty?" we may imagine M. Benedetti to have rejoined, with a mingled look of cunning and compassion. "Settled? Oh, far from that;" and there and then, on the public promenade of Ems, he made bold to assail the King with the peremptory instructions sent him from Paris. Well may a tablet have been let into the ground to commemorate the scene of that famous and momentous interview —few more momentous in the history of Europe.

"Approval of the present—and a pledge for the future—that," said the Frenchman, "is what we demand of your Majesty, and what we insist on having." "I urged my point with persistency ("*J'ai vivement insisté*"), but the King absolutely refused to authorise me to transmit such a declaration." "I neither can nor will make an engagement of that kind," said His Majesty as, continuing his walk, he wished M. Benedetti a kindly good morning. This was about ten o'clock, and towards two the King sent one of his aides-de-camp (Prince Radziwill) to say that he had now at last received a written and regular intimation from Sigmaringen of Prince Leopold's withdrawal, that he sanctioned this

step "in the same sense, and to the same extent," as he had approved his acceptance of the Spanish Crown, and that he now looked upon the affair as finally settled.

The rupture.

It was a great surprise to M. Benedetti (though it will scarcely be so to our readers) that, though the King had promised to communicate to him direct the fact of Prince Leopold's retirement, he saw fit to make the announcement through one of his aides-de-camp.* After the insulting demands that had been forced upon him on the open promenade before all the gay holiday-world of the place, it was little wonder that His Majesty would not expose himself to the risk of a similar humiliation, even in private. Twice did M. Benedetti—hounded on by ever more frantic telegrams from Paris—apply for an audience to reiterate his requests of the morning, and twice was he informed by the King's aide-de-camp that His Majesty had nothing to add to what he had already said. "I have just met the King at the station," ran

* M. Benedetti argued that this sudden change in the disposition of the King was brought about by a despatch which he had received about noon on the same day from Baron Werther, his Ambassador in Paris, who, in reporting an interview he had (the previous day) with the Duc de Gramont, wrote that the latter had suggested as the best means of avoiding a rupture that King William should write a letter of apology, or at least of explanation, to Napoleon. But the Duc de Gramont (Circular Despatch of 24th July) contested the accuracy of Baron Werther's report (which had, according to Benedetti, such an "unfortunate effect" on the King), and denied that he had ever suggested the idea of His Majesty "writing a letter of apology." Bismarck himself replied to Baron Werther that he must surely have misunderstood the Duc de Gramont, but that, in any case, if the French Government wished to prefer such a demand, it had better do so direct through its own Ambassador, for that he himself (Bismarck) would never take it upon him to lay such an insulting request before his Sovereign.

the French Ambassador's concluding telegram (on the 14th). "He simply said he had nothing more to tell me, and that any further negotiations would be conducted by his Government." Count Benedetti left for Paris, King William returned to Berlin, and, from the moment of their parting, France and Germany were in a state of war.

Bismarck's ecstatic sword-flourish.

On the evening of the 12th July, two days before the virtual rupture, Bismarck had arrived in Berlin from Varzin—whence he had been suddenly summoned by telegraph to the King's side. He knew what this meant, and his mood was high. Smoking his peaceful pipe, the parish clergyman was standing at his door, and the reverend man gave the Chancellor a neighbourly "Good-day" as he swiftly drove past. Bismarck said nothing, but imitated the flourish of a sword-cut and dashed on to catch the Berlin express. Arrived in Berlin, he had a conference with Count Moltke and the War-Minister, who had also both hastily returned to the capital; and this council was followed by an interview with Prince Gortchakoff, who happened to be passing through. It was Bismarck's intention to post off next morning to Ems; but meanwhile there came the news that Prince Leopold had withdrawn from his candidature, and every one in Berlin concluded that all danger of a war was now over. So, too, thought Bismarck—doubtless with a sigh of disappointment at his blithe flourish of a sword-whirl thus turning out to have been premature. In any case, both he and Moltke prepared to return to the country; and

Prince Adalbert, commanding the German squadron whose outward-bound course had been arrested at Portsmouth, was telegraphed to that he might now at last proceed upon his summer cruise. But lo! in a moment all was again changed. For to Berlin on the afternoon of the 13th was flashed the story which we have already related—how M. Benedetti had met King William on the Ems promenade and demanded impossible things of His Majesty, and how the latter, deeply wounded by this last act of arrogance, had refused to see the French Ambassador any more. Bismarck shared the dissatisfaction which, as he told Lord A. Loftus, had been produced throughout Prussia by the too conciliatory conduct of the King; and great, therefore, was his delight when informed by the King himself of the limit to his yieldingness.

Excitement in Berlin.

Whether Bismarck now repeated his ecstatic sword-cut, we are not informed; but one of the first things he did, on receiving the welcome despatch from Ems, was to telegraph its substance to all the representatives of Prussia abroad, and late on the same evening special editions of the *North German Gazette*, containing the brief and unpretending telegram, were distributed gratis in Berlin. And tremendous was its effect upon the capital, which suddenly burst out with an explosion of patriotic feeling long pent up. "As though a stain had been wiped from the national escutcheon, as though a burden, too heavy to be borne for a long time past, had been cast off at last, people were thanking God that their honour had been ulti-

mately vindicated against intolerable assumption. There was but one opinion as to the manly and worthy conduct of the King, there was but one determination to follow his example, and take up the gauntlet flung in his face."* The electrifying telegram had been published at 9 o'clock P.M., and by 10 the square in front of the palace was crowded with an excited multitude, cheering the King, and shouting, "To the Rhine! To the Rhine!"

Indignation at Paris.

These, too, were the shouts which began to cleave the sky at Paris, where a terrific hullaballoo had been raised by the publication, at Berlin, of the official telegram above referred to. This was the straw, argued the French Government, which broke the camel's back; this was the final drop which made the capacious cup of French long-suffering to overflow. It was pretended at Paris that, on the night of the 13th—in spite of what had taken place at Ems during the day—the hopes of maintaining peace had not wholly vanished, but that next morning brought with it the certainty that France must draw the sword to avenge the insult deliberately offered her by Bismarck's "declaring to the public, that the King had affronted the French Ambassador."† Be it noted that the French Government itself did not accuse the King of having treated its representative with rudeness or discourtesy.‡ No; what it complained of was the way

* Berlin Correspondent of *The Times*.
† The Duc de Gramont to Lord Lyons.
‡ "Ma Mission en Prusse," p. 370.

in which Bismarck had boasted to all Europe, "that France had been affronted in the person of her Ambassador." But Bismarck's "boast to all Europe" was nothing but a strictly accurate account of what had actually occurred—of that our readers themselves may judge.* Was it logical, therefore, of the French to behold an insult in the public recital of an incident which in itself, as they themselves confessed, implied no purposeful affront? Or was it reasonable of them to rave about a thrasonical Note from Bismarck to the Cabinets of Europe, when there was evidence of nothing, *and when there was nothing*, but a brief unvarnished telegram of the Prussian Government to its foreign agents, whom it was bound, in the circumstances, to keep informed of the course of events?

Bismarck's divulgence of the Ems incident.

But then its publication? Well, had the nation not a right, at such a momentous crisis, to know exactly how it stood with its destinies? But what, thought the French, were the destinies of Germany compared with the sensitiveness of France, and the imperative duty of every other nation to

* The following is the telegram that was addressed by the Prussian Government to some of its representatives abroad, and to the other German Governments: "After the news of the renunciation of the hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern had been officially communicated to the Imperial French Government by the Royal Spanish Government, the French Ambassador at Ems further demanded of His Majesty the King to authorise him to telegraph to Paris that His Majesty the King engaged for all future time never again to give his consent if the Hohenzollerns should return to their candidature. His Majesty the King thereupon declined to receive the French Ambassador again, and had him told by the adjutant in attendance that His Majesty had nothing further to communicate to the Ambassador."

respect and spare it? The French, in fact, would behold in the published telegram nothing but a final and wilful provocation on the part of "M. de Bismarck," craftily contrived to render all escape from war impossible; while Bismarck, on the other hand, accused the French Government of catching up and twisting his innocent conduct into a justification for a war which it had long been meditating, but for which even the Spanish Crown incident had failed to furnish it with a plausible enough pretext. And not only was this the opinion of Bismarck, but it was also the strenuous contention of so patriotic and anti-Prussian a Frenchman as M. Thiers, whose arguments and whose eloquence were drowned in the frantic cheers with which the Legislative Body greeted the announcement that the thirsty sword of insulted France had already leapt flashing from its impatient scabbard.

This announcement was made on the 15th July by the Duc de Gramont, "with one hand in his pocket, and without a trace of emotion disturbing his handsome features;"* and on the same day the Crown Prince of Prussia, accompanied by Bismarck, Moltke, and Roon, journeyed by special train to Brandenburg to meet the King, who, after parting with M. Benedetti at Ems, had gone to Coblence to visit his Queen. From the Rhine to Berlin —for Germany was already all on fire—His Majesty's homeward way was a veritable triumphal progress; but

A railway carriage Council of State.

* Account of the origin of the war, given by a French correspondent in *The Times*.

how shall we describe the patriotic rapture with which the King was welcomed back to his capital? Never was held so serious a Council of State as the conference between the King and his mighty men of valour in the railway-carriage between Brandenburg and Berlin, and afterwards in the royal palace all through the night and far into the summer morning hours.

Orders had been at once issued to mobilise the army of the North German Confederation; but more wonderful than the celerity with which the disbanded warriors, casting aside the plough and the pruning-hook, rushed to their various standards, was the universality wherewith the non-combatant portion of the nation rose to sign, as it were, and with its blood if need be, another Solemn League and Covenant. Germany was unified; Bismarck's work was already done. There is nothing in all history that surpasses in grandeur the universal and instantaneous uprising of the German people in the memorable July days of 1870. Though hating war, the whole nation glowed with a holy thankfulness that the day of reckoning with its malevolent and implacable foe had at last come. Animated by a spirit of unparalleled self-sacrifice, it cast all its jewels, so to speak, into the melting-pot of the war-treasury; and it was possessed by a fierce determination to do and conquer, and *not* to die. Forgetting the internecine strife which had divided them a few years before; forgetting their differences of race, religion, and political aspiration—all the tongues and tribes of the Fatherland, from the Baltic to the Black

Universal uprising of the German people.

Forest, and from Königsberg to Cologne, crowded round the standard of Prussia with the burning enthusiasm of the old Teutonic Crusaders; and the thrilling sound of the French war-trumpet was quickly drowned in the tones of a many-millioned German choir which, with the religious fervour of Cromwell's Ironsides before a battle, and with the patriotic resolution of the Scots of Bruce on the field of Bannockburn, burst forth into the high and hymn-like strains of "*Die Wacht am Rhein.*"

On the day (16th) after the King's return to Berlin, Bismarck explained to the Federal Council how things came to their present pass—a climax, he said, which had been reached by the manifest determination of France to force upon Prussia one of two things—humiliation or war; and two days later (the 18th) in a Circular Despatch, intended to rebut and rectify French mis-statements, he wrote:—

Bismarck explains the state of matters to the nation.

"We are reduced, alas! to the necessity of seeking for the true motives of the war in the worst traditions of Louis XIV. and of the First Empire—traditions which for the last half-century have been branded by the nations and governments of the civilised world, but which one party in France still inscribes upon its banner, though Napoleon III., as we were fain to believe, had sought to oppose them. This adherence to these traditions we can only ascribe to the worst instincts of hatred and jealousy of the welfare and independence of Germany, as well as to the endeavour to repress freedom (in France) by entangling it in a foreign war."

On the 19th, the day after this was written, the Reichstag met—it had only three sittings—and was opened by the King, whose intensely patriotic speech

evoked a perfect storm of applause, and was answered by the voting of an address of unbounded devotion, and what was more substantial, by a vote of a hundred and twenty million thalers—a sum equal to a fourth of the whole Prussian debt. In the course of the first sitting Bismarck made his appearance, and briefly informed the House that he had just received from the French Chargé d'Affaires the declaration of war—an announcement which produced an indescribable scene of joyful excitement, the whole House rising to cheer, and the spectators in the galleries joining in with salvoes of hurrahs and shouts of "Long live the King!"

The declaration of war.

The declaration of war, as Bismarck pointed out to Parliament next day, as well as in a Circular Despatch to the representatives of the Confederation, "was the first and only communication we have received from the French Government on the subject which has engrossed the attention of the world for the last fortnight."

"... Rarely has any important event occurred in European history, where the documents have been of so scanty a description. To bring matters to the pitch they have now attained, Count Benedetti had recourse to private conversations, which I need not tell you were a mere confidential interchange of opinion, and, from an international point of view, without any binding force. Apparently engaging in friendly chat with His Majesty, Count Benedetti endeavoured to extract declarations which, even had they been given, would never have had any official validity unless subsequently confirmed and ratified by the King in his capacity of Sovereign. But the firmness of His Majesty's character prevented any such declarations being made." ...

"The motives for the war declared against us are stated to be,

His Majesty's declining to pledge his word that the elevation of a Prussian prince to the Spanish throne should at no time hereafter take place with his consent; and the alleged notification to the Cabinets of our refusal to receive the French Ambassador and to negotiate farther with him.

"To this we briefly reply: His Majesty the King, with perfect respect for the independence and autonomy of the Spanish nation, and the right of the princes of the House of Hohenzollern to decide for themselves, has never thought of trying to place the hereditary Prince on the Spanish throne. The demand of assurances from His Majesty with regard to the future was arrogant and unjustifiable. The assumption of a mental reservation, or any hostile intention on the part of the King towards France, is a totally gratuitous invention.

"The alleged notification to the Cabinets never took place; nor did we refuse to negotiate with the Ambassador of the Emperor of the French. The Ambassador never attempted to enter on official negotiations with His Majesty's Government on this subject. He merely introduced the question in personal and private conversations with His Majesty at Ems.

"The German nation, within and beyond the Confederation, has come to the conclusion that, in preferring these demands, the French Government wished to subject us to a humiliation which the country cannot endure; and that, contrary to the desire and intentions of Prussia, war has been forced on us by France.

"The whole civilised world will acknowledge that the grounds for war assigned by France do not exist, and are nothing but pretence and invention."

Diplomatic revelations.

The better, moreover, to open the eyes of Europe to the true nature of the motives for the war, Bismarck now revealed to the astonished world the existence of several draft Treaties, written by M. Benedetti on the official paper of the French Embassy, by which Napoleon had repeatedly tempted and invited Prussia to ally herself with him in perpetrating great public crimes. We have already interwoven in our

narrative the history of these dark and disgraceful negotiations, which fell within the period immediately before and after the war with Austria (1866);* and we therefore now require to do no more than merely refer to the effect now produced by their divulgence on the public mind of Europe. Europe was thunderstruck when, on the 25th July, *The Times* revealed the predatory Draft Treaty of M. Benedetti (of the autumn of 1866), which was nothing more than a promise on the part of Napoleon to refrain from opposing Bismarck's German policy —at the price of Belgium. This was only one of a series of offers of the same kind in regard to which Bismarck, while scorning them in his heart, "pursued a dilatory course (from motives of policy) without making any promises." It can, therefore, readily be imagined that the feelings of Napoleon towards Prussia were akin to the fury arising from the "*spretae injuria formae*," were those of the false lover whose suit had been repeatedly rejected by the object of his pretended affections. "My impression," wrote Bismarck,† "is that the conviction at length dawning upon the Emperor, that no extension of the French boundaries would be attainable with our assistance, has led him to the resolution of attempting it despite our opposition." Europe, indeed, could not doubt this, and public opinion throughout the civilised world was almost unanimous in laying the wanton blood-guiltiness of the war at the door of France. Vainly did the Duc de Gramont and M. Benedetti seek to explain away and weaken the force of the damning revelations

* See *ante*, pp. 373, 404, and 424. † Circular Despatch, 29th July.

made by Bismarck; for the only result of the mutual recriminations now indulged in was the further embitterment of the two nations, and the frustration of the mediatorial offices of the Powers in favour of peace.

For some of the Powers had been fond enough to hoye that peace might still be preserved. Lord A. Loftus expressed the willingness of England to undertake the task of mediation, to which Bismarck replied* that Prussia would be happy to avail herself of England's offer, if France first expressed her readiness to accept it. But this France declared to be impossible; and meanwhile the avalanche of war, already loosened in its lofty seat, began to slip away, nor could its downward and destructive course be stayed by the holding up of horror-stricken hands on the part of the Pope. In a subsequent chapter—that on the "Kulturkampf"—we shall show that the Franco-German war was not only welcome to the Pope, but to some extent also his own handiwork—that it was, in fact, the resultant of nearly equal forces emanating from the Tuileries and the Vatican.† Meanwhile we need simply record the fact that, in order to justify his claim to be called "the vicar of the God of Peace on earth," Pius IX. wrote to the King of Prussia with an offer of mediation. But blood had already been spilt, and the

Vain attempts at mediation.

* "The English agents write to us in English, and we answer them in German," he said, to the intense gratification of his Chauvinistic countrymen.

† See p. 262, Vol. II. of this work.

war-avalanches from two opposing mountain-tops were thundering down to crash together in the valley. France had addressed an Ultimatum to the Southern States, leaving them the option between neutrality—in which case their territory would not be touched—or war, when they would be treated with the utmost severity. But the Southern States, disdaining to be thought "born idiots,"* merely replied by placing their armies under the command of the King of Prussia; and the helmeted hosts of all Germany—marshalling in silent, swift, and machine-like array—swept on to their sacred and imperilled river, chanting the patriotic psalm which, not much less than the needle-gun, helped them on to victory :—

> "*Zum Rhein, zum Rhein, zum Deutschen Rhein,*
> *Wir Alle wollen Hüter sein;*
> *Lieb Vaterland magst ruhig sein,*
> *Fest steht und treu die Wacht am Rhein.*"

In less than a fortnight after the declaration of war the united armies of Germany, numbering about one and a fifth million of men, had been mobilised, and the greater portion of this colossal force moved down to the western frontier. And when the swift but silent work of marshalling was done, the King of Prussia, with more than seventy summers on his brow, placed himself at the head of this dreadnought and determined "Watch on the Rhine."†

Bismarck and Moltke brighten up.

* The expression used by the official organ of the Hesse (Darmstadt) Government in reprinting Napoleon's Ultimatum.

† History of the War by the Grand General Staff.

On the evening of the 31st July, His Majesty left for the seat of war (Mayence was the first head-quarters), being accompanied, among others, by Bismarck, "who had some days previously partaken of the sacrament in his own room." And in the train of Bismarck himself were the chief functionaries of the Foreign Office which, like the army, had also been "mobilised" for service in the field. Like Moltke, who "looked ten years younger" * when the war became certain, Bismarck brightened at the prospect of a life, full of hardships and dangers though it was sure to be, that would do

* "With that the Chancellor came to speak about Moltke, and how he had held out bravely over the sherry punch-bowl, and been pleasanter than ever. Some one remarked that the General looked wonderfully well. 'Yes,' said the Chief, 'and I, too, have not been so well for a long time as now.' That is the war—and especially with him. It is his business. I remember when the Spanish was the burning question that he looked at once ten years younger. When I told him the Hohenzollern Prince had given the thing up, he became all at once quite old and worn-looking; but when the French made difficulties, Moltke was fresh and young again immediately."—*Busch.*

The December (1883) number of the *Deutsche Revue* contained some interesting reminiscences of the war of 1870 from the papers of the deceased Herr von Freydorf, Minister of Baden, who repaired to Versailles to take part in the negotiations for the entry of the Southern States into the North German Confederation. Dining with Bismarck once, the latter said to him:—"He had always foreseen that the German question could never be settled without a war with France, and it was always his endeavour to prevent war with two enemies breaking out at the same time. His Karlsbad water-cure had been first interrupted by the diplomatic negotiations and then by the war, and he was afraid his health would break down altogether; but he had only been a few days in the field when he felt completely restored. It was at Metz, where he had a few days of idleness, that he began to grow ill again. For the rest, he endured all the ordinary fatigues and hardships, and often had nothing to eat but a morsel of bread and bacon—provender which he had never before dreamed he could live on. When anything was really required to be done he did it willingly, and throve upon it; but unnecessary labour always worried him and made him bilious and his veins to swell, and those were his ailments."

him more good than all the medicines and mineral waters he had just been taking; and, buckling on his sword, the Chancellor sallied forth with his Sovereign to do the diplomatic work of the campaign at the head of a devoted band of privy-councillors, secretaries, cipherers, newspaper-hacks, couriers and cooks. With these attendants, or "*Leute*," Bismarck accompanied the King through the war, extemporising a Bureau, or Field Foreign-Office, wherever he halted, and transacting an enormous amount of work. The "*Leute*" lived much with their lord, often under the same roof, generally eating off the same table; and their devotion was rewarded by the confidence of their "Chief," as they called him, who, when in their midst, unbosomed himself on all conceivable topics, and laid down the law with the uncontradicted dogmatism of a Dr. Johnson among his mute admirers at the Mitre. Nor, happily, did the Chancellor lack his Boswell, to whom we are indebted for a record of much that his master said and did during the campaign, and for the following general account of his hero's habits of life in the tented field* :—

The Foreign Office "mobilised."

Bismarck's habits in the tented field.

* "Bismarck in the Franco-German War," being an authorised translation (Macmillan and Co., 1879) of the "*Bismarck und Seine Leute*" of Dr. Moritz Busch, a Saxon journalist of great talents and experience, who acted as Press-Secretary to the Chancellor during the campaign of 1870—71, and thus had a good opportunity of noting many of his master's sayings and doings, which he has recorded with great fidelity. The historical worth of these two volumes of "Bismarckiana" is pretty well characterised by Dr. Busch himself in the following passage from his Diary of the War:—

"I may perhaps mention, that at dinner Abeken remarked, I forget

"The Chancellor wore uniform during the whole of the war, generally the undress of the yellow regiment of heavy Landwehr cavalry, with its white cap and great top-boots. When riding, after a battle, or in watching its course, he wore a black leather case, fastened by a strap round the chest and back, which held a field glass, and sometimes a revolver and a sword. During the first months he generally wore as a decoration the Cross of the Order of the Red Eagle; afterwards he also wore the Iron Cross. I never saw him but once, in Versailles, in a dressing-gown, and then he was not well —his health was excellent through the whole campaign. During the journey he generally drove with Councillor Abeken, since dead; and once, for several days in succession, with me also. As to quarters, he was most easily satisfied, and even where better were to be had, he put up with the most modest accommodation. At Versailles, when colonels and majors had splendidly furnished suites of apartments, the Chancellor, all the five months we were there, was content with two little rooms, of which one was study as well as bedchamber, and the other, on the ground floor, though neither spacious nor elegant, served as a reception-room. Once, in the school-house at Clermont, in Argonne, where we stayed some days, he had not even a bed, so that we had to make him up one on the floor.

"During the journey we generally drove close behind the King's carriage. We started about ten in the morning, and usually accomplished nearly forty English miles a day. On arriving at our quarters for the night we at once established a Bureau, in which work was seldom wanting, especially when the field-telegraph reached us; by

now in what connection, that I was keeping a very exact diary. Bohlen confirmed this, and said in his lively way, 'Yes, he writes, "At 3.45, Count, or Baron So-and-so said this or that to me," as if he expected some day to have to swear to it.' Abeken was of opinion that it would one day be a valuable source of historical knowledge, and he hoped he might live to read it. I said that it certainly would be, and trustworthy, too, even if it were thirty years before it appeared. The Chief smiled, and said, 'Yes, people will then say, Cf. Buschii cap. 3, p. 20.'"

We will only add that to Dr. Busch's book we are indebted for many of the incidents, opinions, and remarks interwoven in our narrative of the Prince's life; and that whenever we have had occasion to quote from his Diary of the Franco-German War, we have generally done so in the words of his English translator.

its means the Chancellor again became—what, indeed, he always was at this time, with brief interruptions—the centre of the civilised world of Europe. Even where we only halted for one night, restlessly active himself, he kept all about him in constant employment till quite late. Orderlies came and went, couriers arrived with letters and telegrams, and were immediately sent off again. According to the directions of the Chief, the Councillors prepared notes and orders; the clerks copied and registered, ciphered and deciphered. Material streamed in from all points of the compass in the shape of reports, questions, articles in the newspapers, and such-like, most of which required immediate attention. . .

"The almost superhuman capacity of the Chancellor for work, sometimes creating, and sometimes appropriating and sifting the labours of others, his power of solving the most difficult problems, of at once seeing the right thing, and of ordering only what could be practically done, was, perhaps, never so wonderfully displayed as at this time; and this inexhaustible power of work was the more remarkable as his strength was kept up with so little sleep. The Minister lived in the field much as he did at home. Unless an expected battle summoned him before daybreak to the army at the side of the King, he generally rose late, as a rule about ten o'clock. But he passed the night sleepless, and fell over only when the morning light shone through his window. Often, hardly out of bed, and not yet dressed, he began to think and work, to read and make notes on despatches, to study the newspapers, to give instructions to the Councillors and other fellow-workers, to put questions or State problems of the most various kinds, even to write or dictate. Later in the day there were visits to receive, or audiences to give, or a statement to be made to the King. Then came the study of despatches and maps, the correction of papers he had ordered to be prepared, the jotting down of ideas with the well-known big pencil, the composition of letters, the news to be telegraphed or sent to the papers for publication, and in the midst of all this the reception of unavoidable visitors, who must sometimes have been far from welcome. It was not till two or often three o'clock that the Chancellor, in places where a halt of any length was made, allowed himself a little breathing-time; then he generally took a ride in the neighbourhood. Afterwards he went to work again till dinner at five or six o'clock, and in an hour and a half at the latest he was back once more in his room, at his writing-table,

midnight frequently finding him reading or putting his thoughts on paper.

"The Count differed from other men in the matter of sleep, and he arranged his meal-times in a peculiar manner. Early in the morning he took a cup of tea, and perhaps one or two eggs; after that, generally nothing till dinner in the evening. He very seldom took a second breakfast, and then only tea, which was served between nine and ten o'clock. Thus, with very few exceptions, he ate only once during the four-and-twenty hours, but then, like Frederick the Great, he ate plentifully and with appetite. . Count von Bismarck kept a good table, which, when circumstances permitted, rose to the rank of a very good table. This was the case, for instance, at Rheims, Meaux, Ferrières, and Versailles, where the genius of an artist who wore the livery of the household prepared breakfasts and dinners for us, to which persons accustomed to simple fare did justice, feeling almost as if they were sitting in Abraham's bosom, especially when, beside the other good gifts of God, champagne was not wanting in the list of drinkables. For such feasts the travelling kitchen contained pewter-plates, tumblers of some silver-like metal, gilt inside, and cups of the same kind. During the last five months of the campaign, presents from home added grace to our hospitable board: for home, as it was right it should, thought lovingly of its Chancellor, and liberally sent him dainty gifts both solid and fluid, corned geese, game, fish, pheasants, cakes, capital beer, and fine wine, with many other excellent things."

On the 2nd of August, King William at Mayence assumed command of the united German armies, praying that the God of battles might smile on his righteous cause; and in exactly a month from this date all France lay prostrate at his feet, bleeding, disorganised, demoralised, without an army, without a Government, without an Emperor. "Verily, in all history," as Carlyle wrote,* "there is no instance of an insolent, unjust neighbour, that ever got so com-

France crushed in a month.

* Letter to *The Times*.

plete, instantaneous, and ignominious a smashing down, as France now got from Germany." The breath of Europe, of the whole world, was taken away by the bewildering events of those stupendous, never-to-be-forgotten days. Never before had modern war been waged on such a colossal scale; never with such consummate genius, endurance, and organisation on one side, or with such utter headlessness, treachery, corruption, incapacity, and chaotic confusion on the other.

Military plan of the campaign.

We are sorely tempted to present our readers with a summary of the military operations of this unparalleled and ever-fascinating campaign; but the scheme of our narrative will permit us to do nothing more than take them along the strategic route by which Bismarck followed the King from Mayence to Versailles (7th August to 5th November). As it was the Chancellor's fortune to be present at the crowning victory of Königgrätz, so it also fell to him to be a personal witness of the two battles which decided the issue of the French war—Gravelotte and Sedan.

As in the Bohemian campaign, the German forces were (at first) again divided into three armies, under the command of General Steinmetz, Prince Frederick Charles, and the Crown Prince respectively. To seek out the foe as fast as possible and smite him where he stood—was the simple general principle of Moltke's strategy at the outset of the war; and it was promptly applied. To the Crown Prince of Prussia, Queen Victoria's son-in-law, fell the honour of striking the first

blow. While the Parisians, in exalted *Te-Deum* mood, were chanting the phantasmal victory of the national arms at Saarbrück, where poor "Prince Lulu" heroically underwent his baptism of fire (and "picked up a spent bullet, whereat the soldiers wept"),* the heir of the future German Emperor, at the head of his army, which was partly composed of Southern troops, fell furiously upon the French at Weissenburg and smote them hip and thigh (4th August). Granting himself no less than his opponent scanty breathing-space, the Crown Prince (on the 6th) again assaulted MacMahon at Wörth, and tumbled back the Duc de Magenta's overweening hosts in hideous ruin—partly on Strasburg, and partly on Chalons. This was on the extreme German left; and meanwhile the right wing, commanded by Steinmetz, all too prodigal of his soldiers' blood,† carried with terrific carnage the Spicheren heights, and all but annihilated Frossard's Corps. All Germany was aflame with joy. The spoils were immense, the glory was great, the omens were all against the French.

The first battles.

It was at this point that Moltke was called upon to display that strategy which achieved results unparalleled

* Telegram of his father.

† The Chancellor said of Steinmetz that "he had made a bad use of the really prodigious bravery of our troops—a blood-spendthrift." And on another occasion: "Steinmetz is courageous but self-willed, and vain beyond measure. In the Reichstag he always kept near the President's chair, and stood up so that every one could see him well. He coquetted also as if paying great attention, and made notes on paper. He was thinking all the time that the newspapers would take notice of this, and praise his zeal, and unless I am mistaken, he did not miscalculate."

in the history of the world. How to deal in detail with the exploded fragments of the French army, was now the problem of the campaign, and it was magnificently solved. Detaching part of his force to invest Strasburg, whither a portion of MacMahon's defeated troops had fled, the Crown Prince with the rest of his strength started off in hot pursuit of the Duc de Magenta, who was heading back towards Chalons by way of Nancy.* The relics of Frossard's Corps had retreated on Metz to effect a junction with Bazaine, who disposed of a force of about 250,000 men; and to the First and Second German Armies fell the task of thwarting the manifest intention of Bazaine likewise to retire on Chalons, where, giving the hand to MacMahon, he might present a united wall of 300,000 men to the invading Germans.

Bismarck studies Moltke's strategy.

It was to superintend the frustration of this evident plan of Bazaine that, on the 7th August (the day after Wörth and Spicheren), King William (with Bismarck in his suite) left Mayence for the Upper Moselle. Passing over the Saarbrück battlefields, headquarters reached St. Avold on the 11th (where Bismarck vainly scoured the country in search of his two sons, serving as privates in the Dragoon Guards); and Henry on the 13th, whence the "King and the Chancellor, on the 15th, made a sort of reconnoitring tour to within a mile or two of Metz, and saw Steinmetz."† On the previous

* A glance at a map will make this part of our narrative clearer.

† "I did not think a month ago," said Bismarck to his *Leute*, "that I should be drinking tea with you gentlemen here to-day in a peasant's house in Henry." And then he called his Press Secretary (Dr. Busch) to give

day—the 14th—part of Moltke's strategic plan had already been accomplished. Steinmetz had been ordered to detain the enemy as long as possible on the right bank of the Moselle (east of Metz); to Prince Frederick Charles was assigned the duty of sweeping round to the south, and barring the westward road out of the fortress to Verdun-Chalons; while the two commanders should then join hands, and encompass the stronghold with an impervious ring of fire and steel. On the 14th, as said, Steinmetz had given successful battle to the retreating French at Courcelles, retarding their retreat by at least a day; and meanwhile the "Red Prince" was hastening by forced marches up the Moselle and round to the right, so as to place himself *à cheval* of the Verdun road.

Mars-la-Tour.

For long it was a neck-and-neck race. Who shall win? Will Bazaine escape? On the afternoon of the 16th, Bismarck with the King arrived at Pont-à-Mousson, and the distant thunder of

him directions for contradicting the assertion of the *Constitutionnel* that the Prussians burnt down everything in their march through France, and left nothing but ruins behind them, "of which, with every opportunity to know the facts, we could honestly declare we had seen nothing." "Say this," said the Chancellor, concluding his directions with regard to another article of the *Constitutionnel*, "that there has never been the least question in the Ministerial Council of ceding Saarbrücken to the French, the matter not having been mentioned except in confidential communications; and of course a national Minister—one in sympathy with the national feeling—could not therefore entertain it. Yet this rumour may have a little foundation: it may be a misunderstanding, or a perversion of the fact that the question was mooted and discussed in the Ministerial Council before 1864 whether it might not be advisable to make over the coal-mines at Saarbrücken, which are national property, to companies. I proposed to pay the cost of the Schleswig-Holstein war in this way, but the thing came to nothing in consequence of the King's aversion to any such transaction."

cannon in the direction of Metz told that the troops of Prince Frederick Charles had already leapt upon the haunches of the flying deer. For six mortal hours during that sanguinary and scorching August day did the men of Brandenburg (Third Corps) alone, against more than fivefold odds, hold with an iron and inflexible grip the struggling game—making up for their weakness by dashing Balaclava-like charges of cavalry against Gallic square and battery — till evening came and brought reinforcements that rolled up the French, and swept them back upon Gravelotte St.-Privat, at right angles to the line of Bazaine's attempted escape. Heroically fought the men of Brandenburg who, at Vionville—Mars-la-Tour, compelled Bazaine to halt and prepare for a decisive encounter, with his face to Paris and his back to Metz.

This was the news that reached headquarters at Pont-à-Mousson*—twenty miles away—on the evening

* "At last about three o'clock on the afternoon of the 16th we drove over the slope of the hill, and down into the valley of the Moselle towards Pont-à-Mousson. It is a town of about 8,000 inhabitants, stretching along both sides of the river, over which is a beautiful stone bridge, and with a large old church on the right bank. We crossed the bridge and came into a market-place surrounded with arcades, hotels, and cafés, and an old town-house, before which the Saxon infantry were lying on straw spread on the ground. Here we turned into the Rue Saint-Laurent, where the Minister, with Abeken, Keudell, and Count Bismarck-Bohlen, were quartered in a small mansion at the corner of the Rue Raugraf, which was covered with a red-blossomed climbing plant. His involuntary host was, so we heard, an old gentleman who had gone off with madame on his travels. The Chancellor took possession of the apartments on the first floor, which looked out on the little garden at the back. The Bureau was established on the ground floor in a back room, and a smaller room next it served as the dining-room."—*Busch.*

of the 16th; and by four o'clock next morning the Chancellor was in the saddle and away with the King to inspect the battlefields of Mars-la-Tour, and make arrangements for the Waterloo that was to follow this other Quatre-Bras. The latter duty was the King's concern, but what absorbed Bismarck was the search for his soldier-sons, whose regiment, he knew, had hurled itself in self-sacrificial fury on the vastly out-numbering French. The Chancellor's boys—one in his twenty-first, the other only in his eighteenth year—had behaved in action with a courage worthy of their father. The elder, Herbert, had received no fewer than three shots—one through the front of his tunic, another on his watch, and a third in the thigh; while his brother, Count William (the King's godson), had come out of the deadly welter unscathed; and the Chancellor "related with manifest pride how the latter, with his strong arms, had dragged out of the fray one of his comrades who was wounded in the leg, and ridden off with him to a place of safety."* After searching about for some time over the bloody battlefield, the Chancellor at last found his eldest son lying in a farmyard, where there were also a considerable number of other wounded men.

Bismarck searches for his soldier-sons.

* "During the attack at Mars-la-Tour," said Bismarck on another occasion, "Count Bill's horse stumbled with him at a dead or wounded Gaul, lying before him, within fifty feet of the French square. But after a few moments he shook himself together again, jumped up, and, not being able to mount, led the brown horse back through the shower of bullets. Then he found a wounded dragoon, whom he set upon his horse, and covering himself thus from the enemy's fire on one side, he got back to his own people. The horse fell dead after shelter was reached."

"They were under the care," said Bismarck, "of a head doctor, who could not contrive to procure water for his patients, and who from a kind of prudery had refrained from taking the hens and turkeys that were running about the yard. 'He durst not do so,' he said. Remonstrances were of no use, so I threatened to shoot the poultry with my revolver, and then I gave him twenty francs wherewith to buy fifteen of the hens. At last, remembering that I was a Prussian General, I commanded him to do as I desired, upon which he obeyed me. But I had to look about for the water myself, and get it brought to them in vessels."

A few days afterwards, the Chancellor had his wounded son removed to his own quarters at Pont-à-Mousson, where a bed was made up for him on the floor of his father's room.*

The Chancellor had left Pont-à-Mousson at break of day on the 17th (day after Mars-la-Tour); he was back by sundown; and next morning by three o'clock he was off again with the King to witness the bloodiest battle of the campaign—St.-Privat-Gravelotte. But what single eye could take in, or what single pen describe the incidents of a battle which extended over a broken country (so broken that cavalry could not act) of more than seven miles, which raged

Gravelotte.

* About this time the Chancellor "expressed a hope that he might meet his second son, about whom he frequently inquired of the officers, and he remarked, 'You see how little nepotism there is with us. He has now been serving twelve months, and has not been promoted, whilst others, who have not served much more than one month, are ensigns already.' I ventured to ask how that could be. 'Indeed, I don't know,' replied he. 'I have particularly inquired whether there was any fault in him—drinking or anything of that kind; but no, he seems to have conducted himself quite properly, and in the cavalry fight at Mars-la-Tour he charged the French square as bravely as any man among them.' A few weeks afterwards both sons were promoted to the rank of officers."—*Busch.*

with sanguinary fury for nine hours, and in which about 323,000 combatants took part?* A modern battle is nothing but a series of detached engagements, and as Bismarck remained all day with the King, who commanded in person (for the first time in this war) on the right or Gravelotte wing, he could only behold a portion of the fray. But this was the part where the fighting fury was fiercest, and where the carnage was most frightful. Looking at the battle with the eye of a soldier—and by competent judges he has been pronounced to possess a very fine military instinct—Bismarck disapproved of some of the operations. "The jealousy," he said, "of some of our leaders was the cause of our losing so many of our men."† He was frequently himself under the hottest fire, but, heedless of his own danger, busied himself in carrying water to the wounded To the King and his suite it was a day of great danger, fatigue, and anxiety; for the French defended themselves with desperate, and all but victorious valour. But at

* The French had five and a quarter Corps d'Armée, or about 112,000 men, in action and reserve, with 540 guns; while the German line similarly consisted of eight Corps, or 211,000 men with 822 guns—a vastly superior force. But superiority of number on the part of the Germans was to some extent countervailed by advantages of position on the French side.

† Later on in the campaign Bismarck said that "many of our generals much abused the devotion of the troops in order to win victories." . . . "The hard-hearted villians in the general staff," he continued, "may be right when they say that even if the five hundred thousand men whom we now have in France were used up, that would but be our first stake in the game, if we ultimately win. But to take the bull by the horns is poor strategy. . . . The 16th at Metz was all right, for the French had to be held where they were at whatever sacrifice; but the sacrifice of the Guards on the 18th was unnecessary. They should have waited at Saint-Privat till the Saxons had completed their flank movement."—*Busch.*

last they had to yield, and the sun went down on the triumphant Germans who had purchased their victory at the price of more than decimation.* Completely worn out by their incredible exertions, they bivouacked on the battlefield; and amid the ghastly havoc of the fray, by the glimmer of a watch-fire, Bismarck penned the following telegram to Queen Augusta at the dictation of the King:—

"Bivouac at Rezonville.

"18th August, nine o'clock p.m.

"The French army in a very strong position westward of Metz attacked, completely beaten after a battle of nine hours, cut off from its communication with Paris, and hurled back on Metz."

Recounting his experiences of that awful day, Bismarck said:—†

"The whole day I had had nothing to eat but the soldiers' bread and fat bacon. Now we found some eggs—five or six—the others must have theirs boiled; but I like them uncooked, so I got a couple of them and broke them on the pommel of my sword, and was much refreshed. When it got light I took the first warm food I had tasted for six-and-thirty hours—it was only pea-sausage soup, which General Göben gave me, but it tasted quite excellent." . . . "I had sent my horse to water, and stood in the dusk near a battery, which was firing. The French were silent, but when we thought their artillery was disabled, they were only concentrating their guns and mitrailleuses for a last great push. Suddenly they began a quite fearful fire with shells and such-like—an incessant cracking and rolling, whizzing and screaming in the air. We were separated from the King, who had been sent back by Roon. I stayed by the battery, and thought to myself, 'if we have to retreat, put yourself on the first gun-carriage you can find.' We now expected that the French infantry would support the attack, when they might have

* The German loss was about one-seventh of the effective strength; that of the French nearly one-eighth.

† Busch.

taken me prisoner unless the artillery carried me away with them. But the attack failed, and at last the horses returned, and I set off back to the King. We had gone out of the rain into the gutter, for where we had ridden to the shells were falling thick, whereas before they had passed over our heads. Next morning we saw the deep holes they had ploughed in the ground.

"The King had to go back farther, as I told him to do, after the officers had made representations to me. It was now night. The King said he was hungry, and what could he have to eat? There was plenty to drink—wine and bad rum from a sutler—but not a morsel to eat but dry bread. At last, in the village, we got a few cutlets, just enough for the King, but not for any one else, so I had to find out something for myself. His Majesty wanted to sleep in the carriage, among dead horses and badly-wounded men. He afterwards found accommodation in a little public-house. The Chancellor had to look out somewhere else. The heir of one of the greatest German potentates (the young Hereditary Grand Duke of Mecklenburg) kept watch by our common carriage, that nothing should be stolen, and (General) Sheridan and I set off to find a sleeping-place. We came to a house which was still burning, and that was too hot. I asked at another, 'full of wounded soldiers.' In a third, also full of the wounded. In a fourth, just the same; but I was not to be denied this time. I looked up and saw a window which was dark. 'What have you got up there?' I asked. 'More wounded soldiers.' 'That we shall see for ourselves.' I went up and found three empty beds, with good and apparently fairly clean straw mattresses. Here we took up our night quarters and I slept capitally." . . .

Next day (the 19th), Bismarck returned with the King to Pont-à-Mousson; and on the evening of the 20th we hear of his entertaining to dinner General Sheridan and his American companions, "with whom he talked eagerly in good English, whilst champagne and porter circulated." On the morning of the same day the Chancellor had received a visit from the Crown Prince, whose headquarters were a good score of miles

away to the south-west, on the road from Nancy to Chalons by which he was advancing after the retreating forces of MacMahon.

The battles of the 16th and 18th had sealed the fate of Bazaine's army which—such of it as had not been slaughtered—was now cooped up in and around Metz by Prince Frederick Charles, as a bird lies cowed in the net of the fowler. Strasburg, too, with other minor fortresses of Alsace-Lorraine, was securely invested, and Moltke's immediate object was now to dispose of MacMahon, who had retired on Chalons—thence either to fall back on Paris, or march by a circuitous route to the relief of Bazaine. Which course he meant to adopt, the German leaders did not as yet know, though it was of life-and-death importance that they should find out with the least possible delay. Meanwhile the Crown Prince of Prussia with the Third Army continued his pursuit of MacMahon, as if towards Chalons; and with him co-operated the Crown Prince of Saxony at the head of a Fourth Army (of the Meuse), which had been created out of such of Prince Frederick Charles' forces (First and Second Armies) as were not required for the investment of Metz. Between these two pursuing Armies (Third and Fourth) marched the royal headquarters which, leaving Pont-à-Mousson on the 23rd August, was successively established at Commercy, Bar-le-Duc, Clermont in Argonne, Grand-Pré, and Vendresse—a few miles from Sedan.

A new strategical problem.

Paris-wards through the shining valleys, and the bending vineyards, and the summer-robed bowers of

lovely France, wended the Chancellor with measured steps and steady; and past the spot (at Clermont) where, but a few days before, a knot of tipsy French cuirassiers had made fun of a dog dressed in woman's clothes, which they dubbed "*Monsieur de Bismarck.*" "*C'est le langage de M. de Bismarck,*" shrieked the drunken troopers, as they pulled the anthropomorphic dog by the tail and made him howl: tipsy troopers all scattered to ruin now, and "Monsieur de Bismarck" passing triumphantly over their graves. Sometimes the Chancellor rode, sometimes he drove, and sometimes he used his legs. "We left the carriage here," wrote his famulus, "to ease the horses, the Chancellor walking with Abeken at the head of the procession for a quarter of an hour, in great wide top-boots, which in size and shape reminded one of those we see in portraits from the Thirty Years' War. Next to him walked Moltke—the greatest 'war-artist' of our days, by the side of the greatest statesman of our time—on a French road leading to Paris, and I could bet that neither thought it especially remarkable."

"Le langage de M. de Bismarck."

But one remarkable thing was that at Commercy the King was quartered in a house in the very same street where, more than half a century previously, he had been billeted when, as a delicate young lieutenant, he was marching on Paris to help in abolishing the first Napoleon. What a span of experience was here! Bismarck was not yet born then; but with him a minute reading of history supplied the

Past and present.

place of personal memories. At Commercy, for example, the Chancellor advised His Majesty, for safety's sake, to have the country right and left of the road over which headquarters would have to pass thoroughly searched (for lurking *francs-tireurs*) by a company of soldiers; and "the King agreed to this plan when I told him that it had been followed in 1814. At that time the monarchs did not drive, but always rode, and Russian soldiers, twenty feet apart, lined the way."*

As for Bismarck himself, he seemed to be careless of his personal safety, walking about in solitary places (where, however, he was secretly followed by his faithful and apprehensive Ariel, lest his master should come by violent harm †); and this, indeed, had all but befallen him at Bar-le-Duc, where a man—whose heart was made bitter by domestic trouble, and who had ceased to care for his own life—secretly sought a concealed weapon (which was denied him by the terrified inhabitants) for an enterprise that would have made a

* This reminds one of the precautions still adopted when the Czar travels by rail in his own dominions in time of peace. "The precautionary measures, of which the Chief had spoken, were carried out. We had a vanguard of Uhlans, and the Staff Guard as escort, which being picked from the different bodies of cavalry in the army, all colours were there together, green, red, and blue Hussars, Saxon and Prussian Dragoons, and so on. The Chancellor's carriages followed close behind those of the King."—*Busch.*

† "In Grand Pré, too, the Chief showed that he had no fear of any murderous attack on his person. He went about the narrow streets of the town freely in the twilight without a companion, in lonely places where he was quite liable to be attacked. I say this from my own knowledge—for I followed him at a little distance. It seemed to me possible that I might be of use to him."—*Idem*

great sensation. The man hung about for days, and his plan went to the grave with him.*

"*A la guerre, comme à la guerre*" was the maxim which cheered the Chancellor in the vicissitudes of the campaign. In a rich and fertile country like France, flowing as never did the Promised Land with milk, and wine, and honey, it was generally easy for him to sit at a bountifully supplied table; but the gamut of quarters was swept from top to bottom. Sometimes a lordly mansion, forsaken of its timorous inmates, supplied the Chancellor and his train with luxurious housing, and sometimes they had to content themselves with the lodging comforts of common tramps. At Clermont—

Hardships of the campaign.

"We went to the Hôtel des Voyageurs, and found food and places at the Chief's table in a sort of back room used for skittles, and full of noise and tobacco-smoke. . . . . The Chancellor slept that night on a mattress on the floor, his revolver within reach, and he worked on a table so small that he could hardly put both elbows on it at once, in a corner near the door. The room was meanly furnished; there was neither sofa, arm-chair, nor anything of the kind. He who for years had made the history of the world, in whose head its currents met and changed character according to his plans, had hardly a place to lay his head, while stupid courtiers in their comfortable four-posters had the sound sleep of the idle classes."†

* Charles Loizet, in the *Revue Politique et Littéraire*, for February or March, 1874, quoted by Dr. Busch.

† As a picture of the element in which the Chancellor here moved, we cannot do better than transcribe the following from Dr. Busch: "In our quarters, the Chief had a room on the first floor; Abeken had, I believe, the back room on the same floor, the rest of us were sent up to the second floor, to the dormitory of the two or three scholars whom the school-master seemed to have had—a very large room, in which

What with burning heat and the fatigue of travelling, the Chancellor was once threatened with an attack of dysentery, but he had a rare way of dealing with his

at first there was, by way of furniture, nothing but two beds, with mattresses, but without blankets, and two chairs. . . In the morning a little quiet but ingenious contrivance and re-arrangement was required to fit our sleeping-room for our very different requirements. It became, without losing its fundamental character, at once Bureau, dining-room, and tea-room. In the artistic hands of Theiss some trestles, on which stood a kneading-trough, a cask raised to the necessary height by a not very high box, a door which we appropriated, and which was laid by the artist on the top of the kneading-trough and cask, made us a magnificent table, at which the Chancellor himself afterwards dined and breakfasted, and which between the meal-times served as writing-table for the secretaries and councillors, at which world-stirring ideas of the Count in the room below were reduced to shape and written out, and the most important despatches, instructions, telegrams, and newspaper articles penned. The want of chairs was happily supplied by a form from the kitchen and an empty box or two; a cracked and altogether shaky wash-hand-basin was found, which Willisch, clever as an old sailor in mending and patching, made tight again by the help of sealing-wax. For candlesticks, the Minister and ourselves made use of the empty wine-bottles—champagne-bottles answer the purpose best—and in the necks of these, good stearine candles burn as brightly as in the sockets of silver candlesticks. Not so easily and happily as in the matters of utensils, furniture and lights, did we contrive about getting the necessary water either for washing or drinking purposes, for the crowds of men who had been besieging the little wells of Clermont during the two days before had pumped away all the water for themselves and their horses. . . In two little school-rooms on the ground-floor, the Bureau of the War Minister, or the General Staff, was established; and there quartermasters and soldiers wrote on the school-tables and the master's desks. . . Meanwhile every one was working hard in our Bureau. On the table, which still bore every sign of its origin as a kitchen-door, councillors and secretaries wrote and deciphered with great activity, in the midst of a picturesque confusion of portfolios and papers, cloaks, shoes, and clothes-brushes, bottles with candles in them, with which to seal the documents, torn paper, and open envelopes, with which the ground was strewed. Orderlies came and went, couriers and Government messengers. Everybody talked without minding any one else. We were too much in a hurry to take notice. . . From the street below rose the almost continual tramp, tramp, music, the rattle of drums, and rumbling of wheels."

ailments. One morning, he said, he had had cramp in the legs all night, which often happened with him, and then he got up and walked about his room with bare feet in order to catch a cold. "One devil," he remarked, "drove out the other. The cramp went away, and the snivelling came on." Rough with his own remedies, he felt for the woes of others. He sighed to think that his business would not allow him to tend the wounded; * and he frequently conversed with the common soldiers, giving them brandy, tobacco, and even bread.

"Last night," he once said, "I asked the sentinel outside the door who he was, and what he got to eat, and I heard that the man had not had anything to eat for four-and-twenty hours. Then I went in and found the cook, and cut a great hunch of bread, and took it to him, which seemed to be most acceptable to him."

But not alone with his own countrymen did the Chancellor converse. He was fond no less of administering severe rebukes to captured *francs-tireurs*, than of chatting familiarly with the conquered race, and he actually succeeded in insinuating himself into the good graces of many of his guests. In returning home after the war, a Bavarian officer was shown the room (at Clermont) in which King William had slept.

"The old gentleman (who had been His Majesty's host) could not sufficiently praise the Emperor's chivalrous manners, and he did not think Bismarck nearly so dreadful as he was represented. The

* "I went to assist the Dutch, who had set up their ambulance close by in a large green tent, to bring in the wounded and nurse them. When the Minister came back he asked me what I had been doing, and I told him. 'I should like to have gone with you,' he said, drawing a deep breath."—*Busch.*

Count had come there one day to see the Emperor, but had to wait a very long time, for Moltke was already engaged with him. He (the old gentleman) had taken a walk with Bismarck through the garden whilst he was waiting, and found him very pleasant. The Chancellor spoke French admirably, and no one would have thought him such a terrible Prussian. He had talked with him about all kinds of rural matters, and had shown himself as much at home there as in politics. Such a man, he said emphatically, is what France needs."

MacMahon's dilemma.

Meanwhile the gorgeous green of summer was beginning to deepen into the golden hues of autumn, and the grass to grow on the myriad graves of Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte; but where was MacMahon with the collected relics of the French army, which were the last hope and stay of the bitterly deceived and desperate nation, and which the Crown Prince had been endeavouring to discover for a week and more? "*Vorwärts, immer vorwärts*" towards the West marched the armies of the two Crown Princes (of Prussia and Saxony), in the hope of overtaking and giving battle to the Duc de Magenta at the Imperial camp of Chalons; but, alas! the disorganisation of the French forces assembled there was still such as to render it hopeless for them to turn round on their pursuers. What shall they do, then? Retire on Paris, and make a final stand under its walls; or march on Metz, to relieve and be joined by Bazaine? For the former plan were both the Emperor and Marshal MacMahon, while imperative orders came from the Regency in Paris to adopt the latter course. Confusion million-fold confounded reigned in the councils of the camp at Chalons; but at last MacMahon, subordinating his own military

judgment to the advocates of political exigency at Paris, reluctantly resolved to attempt the impossible.

On the 25th of August, to the King's headquarters in Bar-le-Duc, word was brought that MacMahon in hot haste had evacuated the camp at Chalons, and marched to the north-west on Rheims with the apparent intention of doubling back on Metz. But meanwhile, until his intention should become unmistakably plain, the German leaders did no more than give a right half-front direction to the enormous host of more than 200,000 men which, on an irregular frontage of nearly fifty miles, was sweeping forward to the west, Paris-wards. For three more days this altered movement was continued, and then—

A splendid strategic advance.

"On Sunday, the 29th, we were surprised by great news. With the whole army, save what remains for the investment of Metz, we alter the direction of our march, and instead of going westward to Chalons, we move northwards under the edge of the forest of Argonnes to the Ardennes, and the Meuse district."

"Right-half-wheel!" again resounded all along the enormous line, and there was now executed by the German armies "one of the grandest feats of strategical combination that has ever been performed."* It was, indeed, the main achievement of the war, and was rendered possible by the splendid scouting of the German cavalry, which hung an impenetrable veil before its own infantry while detecting every movement of the enemy's. Not long was it before the heads of the

* "The Franco-German War." By Colonel Borbstaedt and Major Dwyer. With maps, etc. (Asher & Co., 1873).

German columns were within striking distance of MacMahon's forces, who was hastening eastward to cross the Meuse in the direction of Metz; but his movement became ever more flurried in proportion to the swiftness wherewith the Germans deployed their armies on a frontage parallel to his flank line of march. Alternately obeying his own military instincts and the imperative orders from Paris, MacMahon dodged and doubled in the basin of the Meuse like a breathless and bewildered hare.

"This chase," said Bismarck, at Busancy, "reminds me of a wolf hunt I once had in the Ardennes, which begin just here. We were for many long days up in the snow, and at last heard that they had found the tracks of a wolf. But when we went after him he had vanished. So it will be to-day with the French." But Moltke, the "battle-thinker," the hunter of armies, had taken good care that it should not be so; as Bismarck was able to convince himself next day at Beaumont, where he witnessed an engagement, rich in results to the Germans, that proved to the French the utter hopelessness of their attempting to pursue their Metz-ward march. The Chancellor's wolf had not been caught, but it had now been forced to stand at bay. As the battle of Mars-la-Tour compelled Bazaine to relinquish his plan of reaching Verdun and to fight for his life with his back to Metz, so the victory of Beaumont proved to MacMahon that his only resource left was to abandon the attempt to reach Bazaine, and to concentrate his rabble army around the frontier

The "wolf" at bay.

fortress of Sedan; and on the night of the 31st of August the curtain of darkness fell on him and his army in this position, with the Germans closing in around him as hounds encompass a hunted stag—that curtain of darkness which was to rise next day on one of the most momentous dramas in the history of the world.

Headquarters that night were at Vendresse*—a townlet about fourteen miles to the south of Sedan; and, early in the morning of the 1st September, Bismarck was up and away with the King and his brilliant suite of Generals and Princes to witness what was well known would be a mere *battue* of the French army. After driving northward for several miles, all mounted their horses — everything being done exactly as in autumn-manœuvre time—and rode to the appointed rendezvous at the top of the hill of Frenois, where a magnificent battle panorama, lighted by bright sunshine from a cloudless sky, burst upon the sight. Down in front wound the serpentine and silver-shining Meuse past the cliff-like citadel of Sedan, and away beyond on the Belgian frontier stretched that verdant forest of Arden, where Touchstone jested and Orlando loved.†

Sedan.

* "In Vendresse the Chancellor was quartered in the house of widow Baudelot."—*Busch.*

† "On our hill a brilliant assemblage had gathered; the King, Bismarck, Moltke, Roon, a crowd of princes, Prince Karl, their Highnesses of Weimar and Coburg, the Hereditary Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, generals, aides-de-camp, marshals of the household, Count Hatzfeld, who after a time disappeared, Kutusoff the Russian, Colonel Walker the English military attaché, General Sheridan and his adjutant, all in uniform, all with field-glasses at their eyes. The King stood. Others, among whom was the Chancellor, sat on a grassy ridge at the edge of the stubble.

The battle had already begun, as testified by the roar of artillery and the columnar smoke of burning villages. For no fewer than 618 German guns were gradually drawing an ever-narrowing circle of consuming fire around the doomed place of arms, and its defenders had little more than half as many cannon wherewith to thunder back reply. In numbers, also, they were to their assailants as nearly one to two; while the latter, moreover, were nerved by the moral force that springs from past victory, and commanded by leaders who had a well-defined plan of action.* But no plan of action at all had the poor, distracted, disorganised, and demoralised French, save that which comes of wild despair. Despair on every side, for, turn whithersoever they will, they see nothing but encompassing hordes of helmeted foes who converge from every point around, and close in upon their quarry in concentric, ever thickening, irresistible ranks. In vain does the fairest, bravest, choicest chivalry of France hurl itself in successive charges against the encircling battalions of Germany, as a new-caught bird of gaudy plumage dashes itself against the wires of its prison-cage; but

I heard that the King had sent round word that large groups must not stand together, as the French in the fortress might fire on them."—*Busch.*

* In their scientific "History of the Franco-German War," Colonel Borbstaedt and Major Dwyer estimate that "121,000 infantry, with 618 guns, was the number of German troops that took an active part in the battle of Sedan (no portion of the cavalry having been employed); . . . . while the strength of the French army on September 1st, as stated by Generals Wimpffen and Ducrot, was between 60,000 and 70,000 combatants of all arms, with 320 guns and 70 mitrailleuses; so that there remained (as at Gravelotte) a very considerable superiority of force on the side of the Germans—a fact that must always be remembered.

alas! the fairest chivalry of France is broken and shivered with Teutonic bullet and bayonet, as a furious wave is shattered into spray by an opposing rock. All through the bright September day raged the stupendous but unequal conflict—gazed upon by the King and his retinue from the amphitheatric slope of Frenois. And after watching the combat for nearly ten long hours, they saw the Gallic Gladiator sink beneath his wounds; but, until the fallen Gladiator should sue for mercy, it was not for the high spectators to elevate their thumbs. Rather, indeed, the contrary signal was given in the King's command to a park of artillery to play upon the fortress, into which in wild and mutinous confusion were streaming the exploded masses of the French army — converting it into a horrid slaughter-house and hell upon earth.

"Not yield yet?" exclaimed the King, who wished to bring things to a climax as fast as possible. "More artillery, then!"*

But before the fresh batteries had reached the height whence they were to pour compelling death and destruction into the raging Pandemonium beneath, lo! a white flag was seen to flutter from the battlements.

At last, at last, the Gallic Gladiator had held up an imploring hand.

Hereupon the King sent Colonel Bronsart von

* "The King, therefore, anxious to bring about or hasten a catastrophe at Sedan, ordered at five p.m. the corps artillery of the 2nd Bavarian Corps posted at Wadelincourt, and the two Bavarian batteries at Villette, to open their fire on the fortress of Sedan, crowded as it was with troops." —*History of the War before quoted.*

Schellendorf* with a flag of truce down into the fortress. Asking for the Commander-in-Chief, this officer was, to his utter astonishment, led into the presence of—the Emperor Napoleon!

"What is your errand?" quoth His Majesty.

"To summon the army and fortress to surrender," was the brief reply.

The Emperor said that for this he must refer him to General de Wimpffen, who had but that day succeeded to MacMahon (severely wounded) as Commander-in-Chief, adding that he would himself write to the King by a special messenger.

Back to the heights of Frenois galloped Colonel Bronsart with the astounding tidings that the Emperor himself was in the fortress, and would at once communicate with the King.

There was a moment of dumbfounded silence.

"This is, indeed, a great success," then said the King to his retinue. "And I thank thee" (turning to the Crown Prince) "that thou hast helped to achieve it."

With that the King gave his hand to his son, who kissed it; then to Moltke, who kissed it also. Lastly, he gave his hand to the Chancellor, and talked with him for some time alone.

Presently several other horsemen were seen ascending the hill. The chief of them was General Reille, the bearer of Napoleon's flag of truce.† Dismounting about

* He succeeded General von Kameke as Prussian Minister of War, in 1883.

† For the details of this meeting we have been indebted, no less to Dr. Busch's notes, than to Professor Anton von Werner's dioramic pourtrayal

ten paces from the King, Reille, who wore no sword and carried a cane in his hand, approached His Majesty with most humble reverence, and presented him with a sealed letter. All stepped back from the King, who, after saying, "But I demand, as the first condition, that the army lay down their arms," broke the seal and read :*

"Monsieur mon frère! N'ayant pas pu mourir au milieu de mes troupes, il ne me reste qu' à remettre mon épée aux mains de Votre Majesté. Je suis de Votre Majesté le bon frère. "NAPOLÉON.

"Sedan le 1 Septembre."

What a moment! The King, as he well might, was deeply moved. His first impulse, we are told, was to offer thanks to God, and then, turning to the silent and gazing group behind him, he told them the contents of the Imperial captive's letter. The Crown Prince with Moltke and others talked a little with General Reille, who stood apart, whilst the King conferred with his Chancellor, who then commissioned Count Hatzfeldt to draft an answer to the Emperor's missive. In a few minutes it was ready, and His Majesty wrote it out sitting on a chair, while another was held up to him by way of desk. He merely said that, while regretting their manner of meeting, he accepted the Emperor's sword, and requested him to empower some person to negotiate the capitulation of the army which had fought so bravely under his command.†

An historic moment.

of the incident (painted for the Sedan Panorama in Berlin), every feature of which was furnished to him or verified by eye-witnesses.

* Letter of King William to Queen Augusta, September 3rd.

† The following is the text of King William's reply to the Emperor :—

"Monsieur mon frère! En regrettant les circonstances, dans lesquelles

While the King was writing this answer, Bismarck held a conversation with General Reille, who represented to the Chancellor that hard conditions ought not to be imposed on an army which had fought so well.

"I shrugged my shoulders," said Bismarck. Reille rejoined that, before accepting such conditions, they would blow themselves up sky-high with the fortress.

"Do it, if you like; *faites sauter*," replied Bismarck, who then asked whether the Emperor was quite sure of his army and of his officers; and whether his orders would still be obeyed in Metz. "Certainly," returned Reille, to whom the King's reply was now handed.

The twilight was beginning to deepen when General Reille rode back to Sedan, but his way was lighted by the lurid gleam of the conflagrations, in and around the fortress, which crimsoned the evening sky. And, swift as the upshooting flames of shell-struck magazine, flew all around the encircling German lines the great and glorious tidings that the Emperor with his army were prisoners of war. Enviable moment of experience, and never to be forgotten by those who felt it! In marching and in fighting the troops had performed prodigies of exertion, but their fatigues were for the time forgotten in the fierce intoxication of victory; and when the stars began

Napoleon and his army captive.

nous nous rencontrons, j'accepte l'épée de Votre Majesté, et je vous prie de bien vouloir nommer un de Vos officiers muni de Vos pleins pouvoirs, pour traiter de la capitulation de l'armée qui s'est si bravement battue sous Vos ordres. De mon côté j'ai désigné le general de Moltke à cet effet. Je suis de Votre Majesté le bon frère.

"GUILLAUME.

"Devant Sedan le 1 Septembre, 1870.

to twinkle overhead, and the hill-tops around Sedan to glow with flickering watch-fires—up then arose from more than a hundred thousand grateful German throats, loud and clear through the ethereal summer night, the deeply pious strains of "Now thank we all our God;" and then the curtain of darkness again fell on one of the most tragic, sublime, and momentous spectacles ever witnessed by this age of dramatic change and wonders.

That night the King returned to Vendresse, "being greeted," as he himself wrote, "on the road by the loud hurrahs of the advancing troops, who were singing the national hymn;" while Bismarck with Moltke, Blumenthal,* and several other staff-officers remained behind at the village of Donchery—a mile or two from Sedan—to treat for the capitulation of the French army. For this purpose an armistice had been concluded till four o'clock next morning. The chief French negotiators were Generals de Wimpffen and Castelnau—the former for the army, the latter for the Emperor. The negotiations lasted for hours, and we cannot do better than detail their course in the words of Bismarck himself:†

Negotiations for capitulation.

* Of Blumenthal, Bismarck subsequently said:—"The newspapers do not mention him at all, so far as we see, although he is chief of the staff of the Crown Prince; and, after Moltke, has up to this time been of the greatest service in the conduct of the war."

† We may here state that our account of the capitulation of Sedan is mainly compiled from (1) Dr. Busch's notes; (2) Bismarck's report to the King (dated 2nd September) on the subject of the negotiations; (3) Bismarck's letter to his wife (dated 3rd September) captured by *francs-tireurs*, and afterwards published; and (4) King William's letter to Queen Augusta, of 3rd September. Everything quoted in the following pages is from one or other of these authorities; and in some cases their remarks are combined.

"Moltke's terms were short: the whole French army to surrender as prisoners of war.

"Wimpffen found that too hard. 'The army,' said he, 'had merited something better by the bravery with which it had fought. We ought to be content to let them go, under the condition that as long as this war lasted the army should never serve against us, and that it should march off to a district of France which should be left to our determination, or to Algiers.'

"Moltke coldly persisted in his demand.

"Wimpffen represented to him his own unhappy position: that he had arrived from Africa only two days ago; that, only towards the end of the battle, after MacMahon had been wounded, had he undertaken the command; and now he was asked to put his name to such a capitulation. He would rather endeavour to maintain himself in the fortress, or attempt to break through.

"Moltke regretted that he could take no account of the position of the general, which he quite understood. He acknowledged the bravery of the French troops, but declared that Sedan could not be held, and that it was quite impossible to break through. He was ready, he said, to allow one of the general's officers to inspect our positions, to convince him of this.

"Wimpffen now thought that, from a political point of view, it would be wise for us to grant them better conditions. We must, he said, desire a speedy and an enduring peace, and this we could only have by showing magnanimity. If we spared the army, it would bind the army and the whole nation to gratitude, and awaken friendly feelings; while an opposite course would be the beginning of endless wars.

"Hereupon I (Bismarck) put in a word, because this matter seemed to belong to my province. I said to him that we might build on the gratitude of a prince, but certainly not on the gratitude of a people—least of all on the gratitude of the French. That in France neither institutions nor circumstances were enduring; that governments and dynasties were constantly changing, and the one need not carry out what the other had bound itself to. That if the Emperor had been firm on his throne, his gratitude for our granting good conditions might have been counted upon; but that, as things stood, it would be folly if we did not make full use of our success. That the French were a nation full of envy and jealousy; that they had

been much mortified with our success at Königgrätz, and could not forgive it, though it in no wise damaged them. How, then, should any magnanimity on our side move them not to bear us a grudge for Sedan?

"This Wimpffen would not admit. 'France,' he said, 'had much changed latterly; it had learned under the Empire to think more of the interests of peace than of the glory of war. France was ready to proclaim the fraternity of nations;' and more of the same kind.

"It was not difficult to prove the contrary of all he said, and that his request, if it were granted, would be likelier to lead to the prolongation than to the conclusion of the war. I ended by saying that we must stand to our conditions.

"Thereupon Castelnau became the spokesman, and, as the Emperor's personal commissioner, declared that on the previous day he had surrendered his sword to the King only in the hope of an honourable capitulation.

"I asked, 'Whose sword was that—the sword of France or the sword of the Emperor?'

"He replied, 'The Emperor's only.'

"'Well, there is no use talking about any other conditions,' said Moltke sharply, while a look of contentment and gratification passed over his face.

"'Then, in the morning we shall begin the battle again,' said Wimpffen.

"'I shall recommence the fire about four o'clock,' replied Moltke; and the Frenchmen wanted to go at once.

"I begged them, however, to remain and once more to consider the case; and at last it was decided that they should ask for a prolongation of the armistice, in order that they might consult their people in Sedan as to our demands. Moltke at first would not grant this, but gave way at last, when I showed him that it could do no harm."

It was past midnight when the French negotiators returned to Sedan from Donchery, having achieved no other result but the prolongation of the armistice for five hours (four to nine a.m. on the 2nd).

Between five and six o'clock in the morning, Bismarck

was sleeping in his quarters ("in the house of a Doctor Jeanjot"), when he was aroused by his servant with the announcement that a French General was at the door and wanted to see him. Jumping out of bed, Bismarck went to the window and discovered that his visitor was again General Reille, who had ridden out to Donchery to say that the Emperor desired to see him (the Chancellor), and was already on the way from Sedan. It may be here remarked that, on returning to report the result of the negotiations with Moltke, De Wimpffen had implored the Emperor to repair to the King's headquarters, with the view of exerting his personal influence in order to obtain more favourable conditions of capitulation for the army; and this, then, was what had brought Napoleon out of the fortress at this early hour.

Bismarck promised to go at once and meet the Emperor, and in a minute or two afterwards, "unwashed and unbreakfasted," he was galloping away after Reille towards Sedan, leaving his room littered with Moravian tracts, and the "Daily Refreshment for Believing Christians," with which he had read himself asleep after the exciting emotions of the previous day. He had not ridden far towards Sedan when he came upon the Emperor in an open carriage ("apparently a hired one"), in which were also three officers of high rank, and as many on horseback beside him. Among these he recognised as personal acquaintances Generals Castelnau, Reille, Baubert, and Moskowa, whose foot appeared to be wounded. "Bismarck had his revolver in his belt, and the

Bismarck's interview with Napoleon.

Emperor's eye rested on it for a moment;"—nervously, we may suppose. The Chancellor gave the military salute, and the Emperor "took his cap off, while the officers (escorting him) did the same, whereupon I also took mine off, though it is contrary to rule." Napoleon said: "*Couvrez vous donc.*" Dismounting, and accosting the Emperor "as politely as at the Tuileries," Bismarck asked for his commands. Napoleon, who wore white kid gloves and was smoking a cigarette, wished to know if he could see the King, to which Bismarck returned that this was impossible—His Majesty being quartered fifteen miles away; and secretly, he did not wish them to meet until the terms of the capitulation had been settled.

Napoleon then asked whether his Majesty had not appointed a place for him to go to, and, if not, what Bismarck's opinion of the matter was; to which the latter replied that, having arrived when it was quite dark, he was wholly unacquainted with the neighbourhood, but that he would be glad to place his own quarters at Donchery at the Emperor's disposal.

"The Emperor accepted the offer, and drove slowly toward Donchery, but (hesitating on account of the possible crowd) stopped at a solitary cottage a few hundred paces from the Meuse bridge leading to the townlet, and asked me if he could remain there. I requested (my cousin) Count Bismarck-Bohlen, who had followed me, to inspect the house, and he reported that, though free from wounded, it was mean and dirty. '*N'importe,*' said Napoleon; and I ascended with him a rickety, narrow staircase. In a small, one-windowed room, with a deal table and two rush-bottomed chairs, we sat alone for an hour—a great contrast to our last meeting in the Tuileries

in '67" (the Great Exhibition year, just after the settlement of the Luxemburg dispute).*

"Our conversation was a difficult thing, wanting, as I did, to avoid touching on topics which could not but painfully affect the man whom God's mighty hand had cast down.

"He complained at first of this unhallowed war, which he had not desired. He had been driven into it by the pressure of public opinion. I rejoined that neither had any one with us wished war—the King least of all. We had looked upon the Spanish question as Spanish, and not German; and we had expected from his friendly relations with the princely house of Hohenzollern that the hereditary Prince would easily have come to an understanding with him. Then he turned to speak of the present situation. As to that, he wished above all for a more favourable capitulation. I explained, that I could not enter upon a discussion on that point, as it was a purely military question, on which Moltke must decide. Then we left the subject to speak of a possible peace. He answered, he was a prisoner, and therefore not in a position to decide; and when I asked him whom he considered competent for that, he referred me to the Government in Paris. I remarked to him that, in that case, things were just where they were yesterday, and that we must stand by our former demands with regard to the army of Sedan, so as to have some pledge that the results of the battle of yesterday should not be lost to us. Moltke, who had been summoned by me, had now arrived. He was of the same opinion, and went to the King to tell him so.

"Outside, in front of the house, the Emperor praised our army and its generalship; and when I admitted to him that the French had also fought well, he came back to the conditions of the capitulation, and asked whether it was not possible for us to allow the corps shut up in Sedan to cross the Belgian frontier, and there to lay down

* "About 800 paces from the bridge over the Meuse, at Donchery, there stands on the right of the high road, which is lined with poplars, a solitary house, which was then inhabited by a Belgian weaver. It is a one-storeyed house, painted yellow, with four windows in front, white shutters on the ground floor, and on the first floor white venetian blinds. It is slated, like most of the houses in Donchery. Close beside it on the left there was a field of potatoes in flower, while to the right there were a few bushes across the path leading to the house, which was about fifteen paces from the high road."—*Dr. Busch.*

their arms and be 'interned.' I tried again to make him understand that this was a military question, not for me to decide without an understanding with Moltke. And as he had explained that, as a prisoner, he could not take upon himself the imperial powers of the Government, the negotiations on these questions could only be conducted with the general in command at Sedan.

"Meantime, efforts had been made to find him better accommodation; and the officers of the general staff had discovered that the château of Bellevue, near Frenois, where I had first met him, was suitable for his reception, and was not yet filled with the wounded. I told him so, and advised him to settle himself there, as the little weaver's house was not comfortable, and he perhaps needed rest. We would inform the King that he was there. He agreed to this, and I rode back to Donchery to dress myself (in my full uniform). Then I conducted him with a guard of honour, consisting of a squadron of the first Cuirassier regiment, to Bellevue. At the conference which now began, the Emperor wished to have the King present—from whom he expected softness and good-heartedness—but he also wanted me to take part.

"I, on the contrary, was determined that the military men, who can be harder, should have the whole affair to settle. So I whispered to an officer as we went upstairs that he was to call me out in about five minutes—the King wanted to speak with me—and he did so. With regard to the King, the Emperor was told that he could not see him till after the capitulation was settled."

Bismarck then rode to Chéhery (on the road to Vendresse), in the hope of meeting the King and informing him how things stood. On the way he was met by Moltke, who had the text of the capitulation as approved by His Majesty; and on their return to Bellevue it was signed without opposition. By this capitulation, 83,000 men were surrendered as prisoners of war, in addition to the fortress of Sedan with its 184 pieces of artillery; 350 field-guns, 70 mitrailleuses, 12,000 horses, and enormous

An unparalleled capitulation.

quantities of military stores. Among the prisoners thus yielded up were the Emperor and one of his Field-marshals (MacMahon), 40 Generals, and 2,825 various other officers, all of whom, by the special mercy of King William, were released on parole. *

With the capitulation sealed and signed, Bismarck and Moltke now hastened back to the King, whom they found on the heights above Donchery about noon. His Majesty ordered the important document to be read aloud to his numerous and brilliant suite, which included several German Princes. At the same time he added a few words of acknowledgment for the grand results which had been already achieved, offering "his best thanks to every one of those who have contributed a leaf to the chaplet of laurels and the fame of the Fatherland."

King William meets his Imperial captive.

And now that an appeal *ad misericordiam* had been put out of the Emperor's power, the King, accompanied by the Crown Prince, rode down to the château of Bellevue to meet the fallen Emperor. "At one o'clock," wrote His Majesty to Queen Augusta, "I and Fritz set out, accompanied by an escort of cavalry belonging to the Staff. I dismounted at the château, and the Emperor came out to meet me. The visit lasted for a quarter of

* "Your Majesty's assent to the release of the officers on parole was received with the warmest thanks, as a sign of Your Majesty's desire not to hurt the feelings of troops which had fought bravely any farther than was necessary to secure our military and political interests. General de Wimpffen afterwards gave expression to the same feeling in a letter in which he thanked General von Moltke for the considerate form in which he conducted the negotiations."—*Bismarck's Report to the King.*

an hour. We were both deeply moved. I cannot describe what I felt at the interview, having seen Napoleon only three years ago at the height of his power." There is no authentic record of what was said at this tragic meeting, but we can well imagine the general lines on which the conversation moved.* "When the Emperor came out," said Bismarck, "his eyes were full of big tears. With me he had been less affected, and altogether dignified."

And now while the sad and broken-hearted Emperor was left to spend his last day on his native soil prior to his departure for the place of his detention at Wilhelmshöhe, near Cassel (once, strange to say, the residence of his uncle, King Jerome of Westphalia),† King William, accompanied by Bismarck and the rest of his paladins, started on a ride through all the positions occupied by the German armies around Sedan. For five long hours, over hill and dale, from battery to battalion, from regiment to regiment, and from corps to corps, through all the various tribes of the Fatherland in arms—rode the brilliant cavalcade, greeted with triumphant music and frantic cheering wherever it came. "I cannot describe," wrote the King, "the reception given me by

* Writing under date Versailles, October 10th, Dr. Busch says: "At table they spoke particularly of the conversation of the King with Napoleon in the Maison Bellevue, near Sedan, of which Russell has given a circumstantial account in *The Times*, although no one was present at it but the King and the Emperor, and even the Chancellor knew only so much of it that the King had assured him that not a word of politics had been spoken."

† "The Crown Prince told the Hessian regiments that the King had sent the captive Emperor to Cassel as a reward for the bravery with which they had fought."—*Dr. Busch.*

the troops, nor my meeting with the Guards, who have been decimated. I was deeply affected by so many proofs of love and devotion." In the course of this long ride, Bismarck was fortunate enough to fall in with his younger son, who had escaped the carnage of Mars-la-Tour, and was still serving in the ranks. "It must have seemed odd to the French officers among the prisoners," said the Chancellor, "to see a Prussian General embrace a common dragoon." * Late that night he returned to his quarters at Donchery, having been nearly twelve hours in the saddle, with but short interruption. But, though worn out as he must have been, he now sat down to pen to the King that report on the part he had taken in the negotiations with Napoleon, which has partly served as the basis of our narrative. Next day he rejoined the royal headquarters at Vendresse, and was present at the banquet at which the King proposed the following toast in champagne, that was now served for the first time during the war:—

The Chancellor finds his son.

A royal toast.

"We must to-day, out of gratitude, drink the health of my brave army. You, General von Roon, as Minister of War, whetted our sword; you, General von Moltke, wielded it; and you, Count Bismarck, have brought Prussia to its present pre-eminence by the way in which you have directed its policy for several years. Let us, therefore, drink to the well-being of this army, of the three persons

* Referring to his meeting with his son on the battle-field of Sedan, the Chancellor remarked: "I discovered in him a new famous talent—he possesses exceptional dexterity in pig-driving. He had found out the fattest, on the principle that the fatter the pig the slower his pace, and the more difficult to run away. At last he carried it off in his arms like a child."

I have named, and of everyone else who has contributed to our successes up to the present to the best of his ability."

All Germany was frantic with joy; tumultuous with market-place throngs, with sky-ward leaping bonfires and thanksgiving peals of cannon-thunder, with fluttering of triumphant flags and grateful psalm-singing in the crowded churches. For what victory had ever been like Sedan—so great, so perfect, and so momentous in its results? A thrill of intensest pride and exultation shot through the nation to think that its days of disunion, and consequent weakness, were at last over; that it had ceased to be a mere geographical expression, a scorn, a bye-word, and a prey to the alien; and that it now stood forth in its true character as the first military Power in the world. The phantom of French supremacy, which had so long spread its vampire wings over apprehensive and submissive Europe, had vanished like a dissolving view in the smoke that had enveloped the battle-field of Sedan, and left "deep, solid, pious, and pacific Germany" the mistress of the Continent.

Joy in the Fatherland.

This grand result had been achieved by community of the national arms, and it had no sooner been accomplished than a loud and fervent cry arose in the Southern States for consecration of the result by political oneness. The time had now arrived, as Bismarck knew it would without his trying to hasten it, when the South came and knocked at the door of the North. It was as if the sunshine of victory had suddenly matured the long-ripening fruit of German unity. And one proof of that

unity was the energy with which the whole nation now lifted up its voice to demand Alsace-Lorraine as the price of the blood which had already been shed, and to protest against the rumoured intention of foreign diplomacy to mediate between the belligerents. "We shall have none of your mediation or your meddling," shouted Germany with one accord, "until we have sufficiently chastised our wanton aggressor, and exacted a substantial pledge against a repetition of his wickedness."

"*Vorwärts, immer vorwärts!*"

Scarcely, therefore, had the victorious smoke of battle ceased to curl around the dead-strewn heights of Sedan, when "*Vorwärts, nach Paris, immer vorwärts!*" again resounded all along the German line, and was received with shouts of enthusiasm similar to that which moved the soldiers of Xenophon when they re-beheld the sea. With Bazaine cooped up in Metz, and the army of MacMahon on its captive way across the Rhine, there was nothing now to impede the march of the German hosts on the capital of France—there to dictate the conditions of a durable peace; and forward accordingly they sped with a swiftness which, in little more than a fortnight (19th September), brought them in sight of its gilded domes and glittering towers.

French defiance.

But had not King William, in entering France, solemnly proclaimed that he came to wage war "with her soldiers, and not with her citizens"? And had he not, moreover, already given account of most of her soldiers? Yes, but other hordes of Gallic combatants were now, as it were, being stamped

out of the ground like crops of dragons' teeth—all animated with a fierce resolve to treat not with the invader, neither parley with him, but to resist and oppose him unto the very death. "Not an inch of our soil, nor a stone of our strongholds" (*pas un pouce de notre territoire, pas une pierre de nos fortresses*)—such were the words of defiance flung by M. Jules Favre in the teeth of the advancing Germans. But who had authorised M. Jules Favre to speak thus in the name of France, and to proclaim a war of extermination? Was M. Jules Favre Foreign Minister of the Empire? The Empire! Ah, that was already a thing of the past, gone and vanished with the Emperor like the ghost of Hamlet's father at morning crow of chanticleer; and a Republic had already taken its place—a Republic, proclaimed two days after Sedan by a few frothy orators and Paris deputies, in whose self-constituted power as ministers now reposed the destinies of France. Acting for this Republican Government, as it styled itself, M. Jules Favre lost no time in declaring * that, rather than conclude a humbling peace, France would immolate herself on the altar of self-defence.† Immortal France, though divested of the shroud of the Empire, had espoused its quarrel; or at least those who took it on themselves to represent her had done so, "preferring the halo of a useless heroism to the less brilliant but more practical merit of submitting to an overwhelming fate." ‡

* Circular of 6th September.

† M. Jules Favre's second circular of 17th September.

‡ *The Times* Correspondent.

Bismarck had left them no room for doubt as to what that fate would be. "Metz and Strasburg, Alsace and Lorraine," were the well-understood conditions of peace at the German head-quarters even before Sedan, and soon after the battle they were openly blazoned on the Prussian banners. To the foreign agents of Germany Bismarck wrote:—

German peace conditions.

"The unanimous voice of the German Governments and people demands that Germany be protected by better boundaries than hitherto against the threats and outrages she has had to suffer for centuries from all French Governments. As long as France remains in possession of Strasburg and Metz, her strategical position is stronger offensively than ours defensively, both as regards the whole of Southern Germany and the left bank of the Rhine in Northern Germany. Strasburg, in the possession of France, is an inviting gate open for the invasion of Southern Germany. In the possession of Germany, Strasburg and Metz assume a defensive aspect. In more than twenty wars with France we have never been the aggressors: we have nothing to demand from that country except our own security, which has been so often endangered. France, on the other hand, is sure to consider every peace now concluded merely in the light of an armistice. To revenge her defeats she will again attack us as wantonly and iniquitously as the last time, as soon as, by her own strength or by the assistance of foreign allies, she feels competent to do so. By thus laying difficulties in the way of the aggressions of France, from whose initiative so many disturbances of the peace have arisen, we are acting in the interest of all Europe. From Germany, no disturbance of the peace of Europe need be feared. But now that a war, which we have carefully avoided for four years, notwithstanding that our national susceptibilities were constantly provoked by France, has been forced upon us, we shall demand future security as the reward of the extraordinary exertions we have been obliged to make in self defence. No one can accuse us of a want of moderation if we insist on this just and fair demand."

This Circular was written about the middle of Sep-

tember, by which time Bismarck had advanced "far into the bowels of the land" on the road to Paris. On the 4th September—the day on which the French Republic was proclaimed—he left Vendresse and passed the night at Rethel,* arriving next day at Rheims, "where we took up our quarters in the Rue de Cloître, in the handsome house of M. Dauphinot (the mayor), nearly right opposite the grand cathedral." King William, on his part, did the Archbishop the honour to accept the hospitality of his palace. Here, in the fine old coronation-city of the Kings of France—with its gorgeous churches, its historical statues, its Roman triumphal arch, and its vaulted acres of the finest champagne †—headquarters remained for nine days (5th to 14th September), until the Uhlan scouts should descry the towers of Paris. Swiftly passed the time, for there was plenty of diplomatic work to be done; and when Moltke, with pensive brow, and folded hands behind his back—the great Napoleon's musing attitude—was pacing the storied

Bismarck at Rheims.

* "At Rethel the quartermaster had assigned us the spacious and elegantly furnished house of M. Duval in the Rue Grand Pont, where the whole of the mobilised Foreign Office is established. The numerous family of the Duvals are wearing crape and gauze, in mourning, if I understand rightly, for their country."—*Dr. Busch.*

† "In the evening (of our arrival at Rheims) we tried different brands of champagne. It was mentioned that yesterday a squadron of our hussars had been fired upon from a coffee house. 'Then,' said the Minister, 'the house must be at once destroyed, and the owner brought before a court-martial.' . . . But the house, at the urgent entreaties of its owner, the Sieur Jacquier, was not destroyed, especially as the treacherous shot had not taken effect. They have simply ordered the landlord to give 200 or 250 bottles of champagne to the squadron, which he gladly agreed to do."—*Idem.*

aisles of the cathedral, excogitating further schemes of conquest, Bismarck, in his sumptuous apartments at the mayor's, was penning circulars, dictating *communiqués* for the Press, and discoursing to guests on the political aspects of the war. One day he made an excursion with the King to the abandoned camp of Chalons, and on the Sunday he attended divine service in the Protestant church—sacred music being furnished by a military band—and listened with as much relish as his royal master to a sermon on the text: "And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them until they came under Beth-Car."

Beth-Car, that is Paris, the Philistines were now rapidly approaching. Leaving Rheims on the 14th, Bismarck passed the night at Château Thierry, "finding comfortable accommodation in the handsome house of a M. Sarimond in the square fronting the Church;" and next day arrived at Meaux, where he found quarters "in the splendid mansion of the Vicomtes de la Motte." Here the Chancellor was joined by "two body-servants from Berlin, who are to follow the Minister in plain clothes whenever he walks out." From Meaux, in a day or two, headquarters passed to Ferrières and installed itself in the magnificent château of Baron Rothschild, who, although he had previously acted as Consul-General for Prussia, had fled to Paris on the approach of the Prussians, leaving his mansion and its priceless cellars in the care of his steward.* Here the Prussians found their

At Rothschild's Château (Ferrières).

* Dr. Busch writes: "On the hill close by the lake we sought and

Capua, and it was no wonder that they honoured it with their presence for more than a fortnight. The pheasants and the flocks of deer in the preserves around the château, with the exquisite wines in the cellar of the Jewish millionaire, furnished "proviant" to the Prussian leaders of a kind which would have induced Dugald Dalgetty to take service with them and with no others. Wishing to respect the property of his unwilling host, the King had forbidden all sporting in the park; but once when His Majesty drove away to a review of troops, Bismarck with Moltke and a few others slipped out into the woods to have a shot at the pheasants. "They can't arrest me," said the Chancellor, self-consolingly, with reference to the royal interdict, "for then they would have no one to see after the peace."

1856-1870—a contrast.

What singular changes are brought round by the wheel of time! In the "Chambre de Chasse" of the château, which had been transformed into a bureau for his staff, Bismarck opened a game-book lying on the table and showed his secretary an entry under date 3rd November, 1856, recording that on that day he had shot there with several other guests of

found, directed to it by Abeken's love of art, a statue, with which the master of the mansion has been pleased to decorate this portion of his estate. It seems to be one of his tutelary deities. Placed on the top of the rising grounds, made of red terra-cotta, this statue represents a lady with a spear in her hand and a mural crown on her head, about half as large again as life. Probably to guard against any misconception, and to prevent our suspecting that the Prussian consul-general had placed a Borussia in his park, 'AUSTRIA,' in large letters, is inscribed on the pedestal of this statue." But some of the visitors amused themselves by scrawling other inscriptions on the statue, having reference to German unity under Prussia.

the Jewish Baron (including General Gallifet, who had led the heroic but bootless charges of the French cavalry at Sedan), and had himself bagged forty-two head of various game.

On this second visit of Bismarck to Rothschild's country-seat, it was comparatively easy to feast upon the running and the flying game which abounded on the estate; but it was found much more difficult to get at the seventeen thousand bottles of wine stored up in the cellars. "Through his steward, the Baron had insolently refused us the wine which we wanted, though I may remark that this and every other requisition was to be paid for."* This was more than Bismarck could stand. Summoning to his presence the refractory keeper of the Baron's keys, he rated him for a niggardly and an unmannerly knave, and threatened to have him suddenly trussed unless he showed himself more alive to the rank and the necessities of his visitors. The wine, of course, was now forthcoming;† but the Chancellor frequently

A faithful but inhospitable steward.

* Dr. Busch.

† "Next day we had what we wanted, and, as far as I know, afterwards had no cause of complaint. But the Baron received for his wine not only the price that was asked, but something over and above for the good of the house; so that, on the whole, he made a pretty good thing out of us."—*Idem.* Bismarck himself had his own notions on the subject of requisitioning from an enemy. "If I were a soldier and had to order things, I know what I should do—I should treat all who remained at home with every possible attention and respect. But I should consider the houses and furniture of those who have run away as found property. And if I caught them I would take away their cows and whatever else they had with them, declaring that they had stolen them and hidden them in the wood. It would be well if they could first be made aware that the different sauces with which we cook little French children are all lies."—*Idem.*

complained of the treatment he had got, "thinking that the old Baron had better manners," and consoled himself by telling stories about the meanness of other members of his family. "The Jews," said the Chancellor, "have still no true home, but are a sort of universal Europeans, or cosmopolitan nomads. Their fatherland is Zion."

The French sound a parley.

But Bismarck had very much more serious employment at Ferrières than feasting on "pheasants stewed in champagne," and lounging in his dressing-gown in the private cabinet of Baron de Rothschild.* For, a day or two before his arrival there, the French, for the first time, had sounded something very like a parley. When dining at Meaux (on the 15th September), "we were informed that some one had arrived from Paris with a flag of truce, and they pointed out a thin, dark-haired young fellow standing in the court in front of the chief's house." This was Mr. Edward Malet, Secretary to the British Embassy in Paris,† and he was the bearer of a letter from Lord Lyons asking whether Bismarck would confer with M. Jules Favre on the conditions of an armistice. England could have sent no more acceptable emissary to perform this act of mediation than the son of the man who had been Bismarck's favourite companion at Frankfort, in

* "In the evening I was summoned to the chief, who did not appear at table, and who, it was said, was not very well. A narrow winding stone staircase, which was honoured with the name of the '*Escalier particulier de Monsieur le Baron*,' took me up to an elegantly-furnished room, where the Chancellor lay on a sofa in his dressing-gown."

† Now Sir Edward Malet, G.C.B., British Ambassador at Berlin.

the days of the old Diet;* and it is not surprising, therefore, that he was admitted to "a long talk with the Chief in the evening over a bottle of cherry-brandy." "*Après mille obstacles,*" wrote M. Favre, "*il avait vu le Chancelier, qui lui avait dit être disposé volontiers à causer avec moi.*"

Meeting between Bismarck and Jules Favre.

This was on the 15th September, and by the 19th Favre ("*après un douloureux voyage, plein d'intérêts cependant*") had been conducted through the German lines and on to Meaux in quest of Bismarck. But at noon, on the 19th, the Chancellor had ridden off from Ferrières (Rothschild's château), and the two crossed each other. The miss, however, was soon rectified, and at last they met near the village of Montry.† "I had halted," wrote M. Favre, who was accompanied by two previous secretaries of M. Benedetti, and escorted by the Prussian Prince Biron,

"I had halted in the yard of a farm which, like almost all the houses I saw on my way, had been entirely sacked, and in about an hour's

* Sir Alexander Malet, for many years representative of England at the Diet in Frankfort, and author of "The Overthrow of the Germanic Confederation." See pp. 162 and 207, *ante*.

† "The day after, Count Hatzfeld told us some particulars of the meeting of the Chancellor with the Parisian advocate and Regent. The Minister, the Count, and Keudell, were a good mile and a half before us on the road, when Hofrath Taglioni, who was with the King's carriages, had told him that Favre had driven by. He had come by another road, and reached the spot where it joined this one after the Chief and his companions had passed. The Chief was indignant that he had not been told of it before. Hatzfeld spurred after Favre and turned back with him. After a time Count Bismarck-Bohlen met them, and galloped back to tell the Minister, who was still a good bit off with Keudell. At last they met near Montry."

time I was joined by M. de Bismarck. It would have been difficult for us to talk in such a spot; but a mansion, the château of Haute Maison, belonging to M. le Comte de Killac, was near, so thither we went, and began our conference in a drawing-room littered about with *débris* of every kind."*

Dramatic enough, and worthy of a painter's brush, was this memorable interview of the German Chancellor with the French Minister—the latter "rather a big man, with grey whiskers coming round under his chin, a somewhat Jewish type of countenance and a hanging under lip," given to tears, gesticulation, and other dramatic airs, full of sentiment and poetic feeling, a haughty suppliant for his overwhelmed country; the former cold and imperious in the consciousness of victory and irresistible strength, courteous but firm, terribly business-like in every word, and as deaf to the appeal of mercy—in a case where justice and prudence bid compassion shut her ears—as Moloch to his victims.

As was therefore to be expected, the interview at Haute Maison, as well as two others the same night and next morning at Ferrières (Rothschild's château), came to nothing. The real and primary object of Favre's visit was to discuss the terms of an armistice, which would permit of the convocation of a National Assembly to ratify the Provisional Government of National Defence, and thus furnish

An armistice discussed.

* M. Jules Favre's Report (dated Paris, 21st September) on the Armistice Negotiation to the Government of National Defence—from which, as well as from Bismarck's own Report on the subject, and from Dr. Busch's notes, we have compiled our account of the interview.

France with the proper means of negotiating a peace.* But, instead of sticking to the business which brought him to the Prussian headquarters, the Frenchman was misled by his emotions into "an academical disquisition on the present and the past, the pith and marrow of which were contained in a declaration of his readiness to yield *tout l'argent que nous avons,* while refusing to entertain the idea of a cession of territory." "Strasburg is the key of our house, and I must have it," said Bismarck repeatedly; which caused M. Favre to declaim on the enormity of his thus seeking to humiliate and dishonour France.†

"I was not able," said Bismarck, "to convince him that conditions, the fulfilment of which France had obtained from Italy and demanded of Germany, without having been at war with either of these countries—conditions which no doubt France would have imposed on us had we been conquered, and which have been an inevitable consequence of nearly every war, even in modern times—would not be ignominious to a country which had succumbed after a brave resistance; and *besides that, the honour of France was not something essentially different from that of all other nations.* I was equally unsuccessful in persuading M. Favre that the restoration of Strasburg no more implied dishonour than the cession of Landau or Saarlouis; and that the violent and unjust conquests of Louis XIV.

* "Both parties agreed in looking on an armistice as necessary to give the French nation an opportunity of choosing representatives, who alone would be in a position to grant the present Government powers sufficient to enable them to conclude a peace sanctioned by international law."—*Bismarck's Report.*

† "When I dropped a word about Strasburg and Metz, he made a face as if he thought I were joking. I should like to have told him what a Berlin tradesman once said to me. I went to his shop with my wife to ask the price of a fur cloak, and when he mentioned a high price for one that pleased me, I said, 'You are joking!' 'No,' he replied; 'in business, never.'"—*Busch.*

were not more closely bound up with the honour of France than those of the First Republic or the First Empire."

This was at Haute Maison, but the conferences took a more practical turn at Ferrières (same night and next morning), where the question of an armistice was exclusively discussed. "*Je demandai quinze jours*," wrote Favre. "Very well, Monsieur le Ministre, these are our conditions," replied Bismarck, handing his interlocutor a document *written in German*, in token that the Unifier of the Fatherland was unwilling to look upon French any longer as the exclusive language of diplomacy. "If you can read that, well and good," we may imagine Bismarck to have thought; "if not, all the better."

"Strasburg, Toul, and Phalsbourg are the fortresses we want," continued Bismarck, "for as a truce would prolong the period during which we had to support our army, concessions facilitating the keeping up of our communications and the transport of supplies must be the preliminary condition of granting it. And if your Assembly is going to meet in Paris, then you must give us a fort dominating the city, say, for example, Mont Valérien."

"What! A French Assembly deliberate under your cannon? I really dare not tell my Government of such a proposal."

"As for Strasburg," continued Bismarck, "the town will shortly fall into our hands at any rate; it is a mere question of calculation with the engineers; and I must, therefore, demand the surrender of the garrison as prisoners of war."

"At these words," wrote M. Favre, "I shook with anguish, and, rising, cried, 'You forget, M. le Comte, that you are speaking to a Frenchman. What! Sacrifice an heroic garrison which is our admiration and that of the world? That were, indeed, an act of cowardice. *Jamais!* and I cannot even promise to report that you suggested such a thing.'"

Bismarck assured his visitor that he did not wish to wound him, and that he was merely acting in conformity with the laws of war.

"The ceding of one of the Paris forts," he went on, "can be obviated by the Assembly meeting at Tours; but the King insists on the surrender of Strasburg."

"Here my strength," wrote Favre, "was used up, and I thought I should faint.* I turned to dash away the tears which were choking me, and then, apologising for this involuntary weakness, I took my leave," with a peroration about the heroism of the people of Paris, and the German text of the conditions of the armistice in his pocket, which were:—

1. The continuation of the *status quo* in and before Paris;
2. The continuation of hostilities in and around Metz for a certain distance, the extent of which was to be determined; and
3. The surrender of Strasburg, the garrison to be made prisoners of war, and of Toul and Bitsch, their garrisons being permitted to march out with the honours of war.

M. Favre returned to Paris, and at once wrote to

* Speaking afterwards of the passage in Favre's account of the negotiations, where he says he wept with anguish, Bismarck remarked: "It is true, he seemed to be crying, and I endeavoured in a fashion to console him; but when I looked a little closer, I positively believe that he had not shed a tear. He intended, probably, to work upon my feelings with a little theatrical performance, as the Parisian advocates work upon their public. I am almost convinced that at Ferrières, too, he was painted white, especially the second time. That morning, in his part of the injured and much-suffering man, he looked much greyer than he did before. It is possible, of course, that he feels all this; but he is no politician. He ought to know that bursts of feeling are out of place in politics."—*Busch.*

On emerging from Haute Maison Bismarck asked the dragoon sentry at the door where he hailed from. "From Hall in Swabia," was the answer. "Well, then," said the Chancellor, "you may boast that you were on guard at the first peace negotiations in this war."—*Idem.*

Bismarck that his conditions had been rejected by the Government of National Defence. In coming to this decision, it was doubtless moved by the conviction that good would come of the tour undertaken by M. Thiers to the chief capitals of Europe with the view of gaining over the Powers to a diplomatic, or even armed, intervention in favour of France; though Bismarck had most distinctly warned the neutral Powers against "committing an act of cruelty to the French nation by permitting the Paris Government to flatter the people with hopes of intervention which cannot be realised, and can only serve to prolong the contest."*

M. Thiers vainly appeals to Europe.

Notwithstanding this clear warning, the Provisional Government defiantly rejected the armistice conditions, and declared to the world that "Prussia was resolved to continue the war in order to reduce France to the rank of a second-class Power;† a charge which Bismarck at once sought to confute by the cold "logic of facts."

"The cession of Strasburg and Metz desired by us," he wrote, "would imply the loss of a portion of French territory pretty nearly equal in extent to that gained by the annexation of Savoy and Nice, but more populous than the latter provinces by about three quarters of a million of inhabitants. If it be recollected that France, according to the census of 1866, contains upwards of thirty-eight millions without Algeria, or forty-two millions including the latter province, which furnishes at present a large quota of the French forces, it is self-evident that the subtraction of three-quarters of a million would not in the least affect her international position, as she would still

* Circular from Meaux, 16th September.

† Proclamation of the Government at Tours, 24th September.

possess in abundance the elements that have enabled her to exercise such a decisive influence on the destiny of Europe in the Crimean and Italian wars." *

Meanwhile the march of military events was swift and decisive. Within a day or two of the futile interview at Ferrières, Toul had capitulated (23rd September), Strasburg ("the key of our house") had fallen (28th), Metz was beginning to despair; while the Germans had girdled Paris with a ring of batteries and bayonets, and scoured the country as far as the Loire. "The Diplomatic Body in Paris," wrote Favre to Bismarck, "would fain be told when the bombardment is going to begin, and enabled to leave the city."

The march of military events.

"I regret," replied the Chancellor, "that I am prohibited by considerations of a military character from giving any information regarding the time and mode of the impending attack on the fortress of Paris; and, as for your other request, I must decline to admit or recognise the views of those who regard the inside of Paris in its present state as a suitable locality for diplomatic intercourse, though we have no objection to the forwarding of open letters (once a week) from diplomatic agents, provided their contents are unobjectionable from a military point of view."

Thus fair, majestic, Sybaritic and sinful Paris—bereft of its reason by the fumes of pride, mortification, and vain-glory—was fitted with its German strait-jacket; and yet it showed no signs of coming to its senses, but rather grew ever more furious in the hands of its grim and relentless keeper. Its keeper pointed out to the Cabinets the con-

Paris in a German strait-jacket.

* Bismarck's Circular of 1st October.

sequences of this unavailing resistance on the part of the French, and disclaimed beforehand all responsibility for the terrible sufferings to which Paris would expose itself by its dogged and senseless resistance to the knife.* This Memorandum to the Powers he penned on the 4th of October at Ferrières, and next day saw him installed at Versailles within the shadow of the stately Palace of the Kings of France—believing, with Macbeth, that "'twere well it were done quickly," and anxious, like the Bastard Faulconbridge, to behold—

> "The battering cannon chargéd to the mouths,
> Till their soul-fearing clamours have brawl'd down
> The flinty ribs of this contemptuous city."

At Versailles Bismarck remained five months (5th October to 6th March); and we cannot do better than describe his general way of life here in the words of his Boswell, Dr. Busch :—

Bismarck at Versailles.

"The house which the Chancellor occupied belonged to a Madame Jessé, the widow of a prosperous cloth manufacturer, who, with her two sons, had fled shortly before our arrival, to Picardy or Sologne, and had left behind, as the protectors of their property, only the gardener and his wife. It stands in the Rue de Provence, which connects the Avenue de Saint Cloud, near its upper end, with the Boulevard de la Reine, and is numbered 14. The street is one of the quietest in Versailles, and in only a part of it do the houses stand close together. . . . During the last months of our stay, there waved over it a flag of black, white, and red. On the right a noble pine shades the whole building, which is a villa plastered yellow, with five windows in front fitted with white blinds. . . . In the drawing-

* Circular of 4th October with enclosed *Pro-Memoriâ* to be communicated to the Cabinets, and then brought to the public knowledge of Europe through the medium of the Press.

room is a cottage piano, a sofa, easy-chairs, and two mirrors. In front of one of them is a little table, on which stood an old-fashioned timepiece, surmounted by a demon-like bronze figure, with great wings, and biting its thumbs, perhaps a model of the family spirit of Madame Jessé, who afterwards showed herself to be anything but an amiable person. He watched with a sardonic grin the negotiations which led to the treaties with the South German States, to the proclamation of the German Emperor and Empire, and later to the surrender of Paris and the settlement of the conditions of peace—treaties, all of which were signed in this drawing-room, which is therefore a world-famous place. On the little table in front of the other mirror lay, on the day after our entrance, a small map of France, upon which the movements of the French army were marked by pins with different coloured heads. 'Probably it belongs to Madame,' said the Chief, as I was contemplating it; 'but you see it is not marked after Wörth.'

"The billiard-room was fitted up as the Bureau for the Councillors, the despatch secretaries, and the cipherers. A part of the conservatory, when the severe frost began in January, was occupied by a detachment which furnished sentries for the entrance. . . . The library was appropriated by orderlies and chancery messengers. . . . but of course not all of the mobilised Foreign Office were quartered in the house of Madame Jessé. More than once it was proposed to move the Chancellor's quarters, and to give him a more roomy and better-furnished house. But the matter dropped, perhaps because he himself did not feel much need of a change, perhaps also because he liked the quiet which reigned in the comparatively lonely Rue de Provence. In the daytime this calm and repose was, however, not so idyllic as many newspaper correspondents then represented it. I do not mean on account of the drumming and fifing of the battalions marching out and in, which we heard every day, even as far off as we were, nor of the disturbance occasioned by the sorties, two of which were made by the Parisians in our direction; nor even of the fury of the hottest days of the bombardment, to which we became as much accustomed as the miller to the sound of his clattering mill-wheels. I refer especially to the many visits of every conceivable kind, in these eventful months; and among which some were unwelcome ones. For many hours of the day our house was like a dove-cot,—so many acquaintances and strangers went in and out.

From Paris there were at first only non-official people who came to hear or to bring news; afterwards, as official negotiators, Favre and Thiers occasionally, with a more or less numerous retinue. From the Hôtel des Réservoirs came Princes, the Crown Prince several times, and the King himself once. The Church too was represented among the visitors by persons of great dignity, archbishops and other prelates. Berlin sent deputations from the Reichstag, single leaders of parties, bankers, and high officials. From Bavaria and the other South German States came Ministers to assist in the settlement of the treaties. American generals, members of the foreign Diplomatic body in Paris, amongst them a gentleman in black—an envoy of the Imperialists, all wished to speak to the busy statesman in his little room up-stairs. That the curiosity of English correspondents should try to intrude itself on him, was a matter of course. Then couriers with despatch-bags full, or waiting to be filled, chancery messengers with telegrams, orderlies with news from the general staff; and besides all these, work in abundance equally difficult and important. Weighing, inquiring, and acting were necessary when obstacles, vexatious annoyances, and troubles occurred. Expectations were deceived which seemed to be well-grounded. Now and then we were not supported, or our views were not met half-way. There were the foolish opinions of the German newspapers, which grumbled in spite of our unheard-of successes, and the agitation of the Ultramontanes. In short, it was very difficult to understand how the Chancellor, amid all this, with all these claims on his powers of work and patience, and all these disturbances and vexations about serious matters and about trifles, preserved his health—he was only once seriously unwell in Versailles for three or four days—and the freshness of spirits which he often displayed even late at night in talk both grave and gay.

"Of recreation the Minister allowed himself very little. A ride between 3 and 4 o'clock, an hour at dinner, half an hour afterwards for coffee in the drawing room, and sometimes later, about 10 o'clock, a little rest for tea and a talk, sometimes long and sometimes short, with those who happened to be there; a few hours' sleep after the day began to dawn. With these exceptions the whole day was given to study or production in his own room, or to conferences and negotiations, unless when a French sortie or some rather important

military business took him out to the side of the King, or to some point of observation where he could be alone.

"The Chancellor had guests at dinner nearly every day, and in this way we came to know by sight almost all the persons whose names were famous or became celebrated in the course of the war, and often heard their conversation. Favre dined with us repeatedly, first with hesitation, "because his countrymen were starving inside," then listening to sound advice, and doing justice as heartily as the rest of us to the many good things which the kitchen and the cellar provided. Thiers, with his acute and clever face, dined with us once. On another occasion the Crown Prince did us the honour of dining with us, when the fellow-workers of the Chief, with whom he had not been hitherto acquainted, were presented to him. Prince Albrecht also once dined with us as a guest. Of the other guests of the Minister, I mention here the President of the Chancellery, Delbrück, who remained several times for weeks in Versailles; the Duke of Ratibor, Prince Putbus, von Bennigsen, Simson, Bamberger, von Friedenthal, and von Blankenburg; then the Bavarian ministers, Count Bray, and von Lutz; the Würtembergers, von Wachter and Mittnacht; von Roggenbach, Prince Radziwill; and, lastly, Odo Russell, afterwards English Ambassador at the German Court. The conversation when the Chief was present was always animated and varied; often very instructive as to his mode of viewing men and things, or to certain episodes and passages in his past life. Home furnished some of the material good things, as presents and offerings, which arrived in the shape of solids or fluids sometimes in such excess that the store-rooms could scarcely contain them. Among the most touching, I reckon a dish of mushrooms which some soldiers had found in a hollow or cellar in the town, and reserved for the Chancellor. Even more precious and poetical was a bunch of roses, which other soldiers had gathered for him under the enemy's fire. . . . Madame Jessé showed herself only on the last days before our return home, and made, as I have remarked, not a very pleasing impression. She spread abroad all manner of stories about our pillaging, which were repeated with pleasure by the French Press, and indeed even by those journals which generally in other respects exercised some discretion and showed some sense of decency in what they stated. Among other things, we were said to have packed up her plate and table-linen and carried them off. Count Bismarck, too, had wanted

to extort from her a valuable clock. The first assertion is a simple impertinence, as the house contained no silver plate, or if it did, it must have been deposited in a walled-up corner of the cellar which, at the express order of the Chief, was never opened. The history of the clock was rather different from what Madame represented it to be. The clock was the one in the drawing-room with the little bronze demon. Madame Jessé offered this piece of furniture, of no great value in itself, to the Chancellor, at an exorbitant price, under the idea that he would value it as a memento of important transactions. I believe she asked 5,000 francs (£200) for it. She did not get them, as the offer of a woman who showed no gratitude in her greed for our exceedingly considerate usage of her house was rejected. 'I remember,' the Minister said afterwards, in Berlin, 'that I made the remark at the time, that the hobgoblin-like figure on the clock, with its grimaces, might perhaps be valuable to herself as a family portrait, and that I would not deprive her of it.'"

But Madame Jessé was not the only one who slandered the Chancellor, for the journalists of Paris now proved afresh, what he once said of himself, that he was the best hated man in Europe. As monkeys rattle the bars of their cage in impotent rage, and spit out fury at their captors, so did the Boulevard knights of the pen now pour forth their wrath on the man who was impatiently waiting for the battering cannon to open their mouths on the "contemptuous city" with a summons of surrender. They described him as "the incarnation of the evil principle," as "the Anti-Christ," as the "modern Machiavelli," as a "Vesuvius of a diplomatist," as a "shrewd barbarian," and as a crime-stained ogre exulting in the blood of slaughtered millions. And not only was he heartless, godless, and unscrupulous as a statesman, but he was also a fiend and a Bluebeard in private life. He was

French opinion of the Chancellor.

always thrashing his wife with a dog-whip, and making her bear the burden of his brutal temper. He kept a harem, from which no shopkeeper's daughter in Berlin was safe; and once, having become enamoured of a singularly beautiful nun, he hired some villains to hale her from her virtuous seclusion and deliver her up to him. It was reckoned in Berlin that he had at least fifty bastard children. One of his mistresses, becoming tired of his cruelties, went to the theatre with a Russian nobleman, but thither she was followed by her savage owner, who lashed her bare shoulders with a heavy riding-whip. He turned his diplomatic knowledge to account by gambling on every European Bourse, and he had repeatedly broken each of the ten commandments.

The Chancellor's opinion of the French.

But between the Chancellor and the nation which thus caricatured him there was little love lost, and his own opinions of the French character were more than sufficient to console him for the slanders of the Boulevards. Apollo, who had flayed Marsyas from conceit and envy, and from the same motives had slain Niobe's children, he regarded as a perfect type of a Frenchman, who could not bear that another should play the flute better, or even as well, as he. "They are an uncleanly people these French," he once remarked, and it is pretty certain also that he shared his wife's belief as to their utter lack of that godliness to which the virtue of soap, water, and rough towels is said to be so closely akin. "I am afraid," wrote the Countess to him from Germany, "there may be no Bibles in France, so I will send you a psalm-book

by the first opportunity, that you may read the prophecy in it against the French: 'I say unto thee that the wicked shall be rooted out.'" Of the French physique the Chancellor had but a poor opinion. "The front of one of our Landwehr companies," he once boasted, "is at least five feet longer than an equal number of the enemy." And while finding little stamina in the men, he could discover no beauty in the women. "I have travelled a good deal through France," he once observed, "and don't recollect ever having seen a pretty country girl, but plenty of ugly ones. Any few beauties there may be, go to Paris to find their market." * *Politesse de cœur*, argued the Chancellor, was not a native French article at all. Whatever might be said of the phrase, the thing itself existed only among the Germans, though the English also, it was true, might have something of the sort. Natural politeness, like an uncut diamond, was to be found among the common soldiery of King William; but the corresponding quality of the French was a counterfeit, begotten of mere envy and hatred.

Moreover, some of the best men among the French people were furnished by the German element in Alsace-Lorraine; though this element was enviously kept down by the Parisians, who ridiculed and carica-

* Compare this with what Dr. Busch naïvely writes of the arrival of headquarters at Clermont in Argonne: "Every one here hobbled along in heavy wooden shoes, and the features of the men and women, who stood at the doors in great numbers, were, so far as I could judge in passing, almost all of them ugly. *But it is probable that the prettiest girls had been placed in safety, before the arrival of the German birds of prey.*"

tured it. The French themselves, the Chancellor laid down, were composed of Parisians and provincials, the latter being the willing helots of the former. France was a nation of ciphers, a mere crowd. It had wealth and elegance, but no individual men. They only acted in the mass. They were nothing more than thirty millions of obedient Kaffres. Under one recognised leader they were very powerful, but not so much so as the Germans could be, if not torn asunder by that infinite variety of opinion which sprang from independence of mind. Viewed ethnically, the Celtic race, he argued, was of the female sex, while the Teutonic people was the masculine element permeating and fructifying all Europe. Whenever German blood predominated, things went well; but where that died out, then farewell to order and progress. The feeling of duty in a man who submitted to be shot dead at his post rather than desert it, alone and in the dark, did not animate the French; but it inspired the Germans, and was due to the survival of their religious instinct which told them that "Some One saw them, when the Lieutenant did not." Theatrical posing was everything with the French, and any of them would readily submit to the lash, if speechified to all the time about liberty and the dignity of man, with appropriate attitudes. "Strip off the white skin of such a Gaul," once said the Prince, in reference to the cruel manner in which the French were carrying on the war, "and you will find a Turco."

He never could hear of the exploits performed by

francs-tireurs without flying into a rage, and he frequently complained that these guerillas should have been captured instead of instantly shot down. Once he rode up to a crowd of these disarmed wretches, swore at them for a pack of crafty cut-throats, and assured them that they would all be hanged. On another occasion, having come across a priest suspected of *franc-tireur* practice, he caused the holy man to be instantly unfrocked, and assailed him with language which would have well become Judge Jeffries in browbeating a prisoner at the Taunton Assizes. French officers who had broken their parole he denounced as scoundrels who ought to be strung up in their red trousers, with "*parjure*" written on one leg, and "*infâme*" on the other. Of Garibaldi, too, and his republican riff-raff in the eastern provinces, he spoke with scornful bitterness; and when asked what he would do with the Italian patriot if he were caught, replied that he would label him with the word "Ingratitude," and show him about for money. But, in speaking of Garibaldi, we have slightly outstripped the march of military events.

Francs-tireurs.

Meanwhile, the centre of diplomatic action—which more especially concerns us—was Versailles, where Bismarck, as we have seen, arrived on the 5th October, and remained exactly five months, or until the 6th March, after peace had been signed. But at the time of his arrival in Versailles peace seemed to the Chancellor to be distant enough, in spite of the triumphal progress of the German arms; for

Bismarck's search for a French Government.

there was yet no French Government in which he could place any treaty-faith, and the whole nation appeared to be animated by the spirit of the Old Guard, which knew how to "die, but not surrender." What Bismarck above all things wanted was a Government, no matter what its form* or who its chief, that would give him a secure and advantageous peace; and meanwhile it almost seemed as if he had no other resource but to pursue the war on the principles laid down by General Sheridan, who said to him:

"First deal as hard blows at the enemy's soldiers as possible, and then cause so much suffering to the inhabitants of the country that they will long for peace, and press their Government to make it Nothing should be left to the people but eyes, to lament the war!"

So indifferent, indeed, was Bismarck to the form of government under which France should reconstitute herself,† that he was even ready to assent to the restoration of Napoleon—could the latter have shown how he could maintain himself on his recovered throne, and keep his engagements. This is evident from the account of his negotiations with General Boyer who, about the middle of October,

General Boyer's mission.

* Under date October 28th (the day on which Metz capitulated), Dr. Busch writes: "He then related that a negotiator from Gambetta had been with him recently, who asked him at the end of the conversation, whether he would recognise the Republic. 'Without doubt or hesitation,' I replied; 'not merely a Republic, but if you like a Gambetta Dynasty, only that Dynasty must give us a secure and advantageous peace'—'and, in fact, any dynasty, whether of Bleichröder or of Rothschild,' he added."

† But his views in this respect underwent subsequent modification, as we shall have occasion to see when we come to treat of the Arnim incident and the relations of the German Empire to the French Republic.

arrived in Versailles as the envoy of Bazaine to treat for the deliverance of the Army of the Rhine, now rapidly verging towards saltless horse-flesh and shoe-leather in famine-afflicted Metz. In Versailles General Boyer was greeted by the masses with shouts of "*Vive la France;*" but what sort of a France, Republican or Imperial? For this question was not yet finally settled, despite the proclamation of the 4th September and the demagogic frenzy of Gambetta at Tours. "Just then Bismarck did not allow a single word to escape him about the negotiations with Boyer;"* and, indeed, he had the weightiest reasons for keeping the delicate and momentous transactions as secret as possible.

"The Count," wrote General Boyer in his report to Bazaine,† "listened to me most attentively. We had been conversing in a cabinet adjoining a room where several of the Count's secretaries were at work, but then rising he said, 'There are some people here who understand French, and walls, as the saying is, have ears; so let us go into the garden where we can talk more freely.' And, lighting a cigar, he led the way."

Thanks to the revelations of Marshal Bazaine himself,‡ we are now enabled to look behind the curtain which then veiled that curious transaction. Prussia, said Bismarck, had not the slightest wish to abolish the Imperial dynasty, nor that form of government which had maintained order in France for twenty years. On

* Dr. Busch.

† Published in "Episodes de la Guerre de 1870 et le Blocus de Metz, par l'ex-Maréchal Bazaine." Madrid, 1883.

‡ Idem.

the contrary, he would rather treat with the Regency (Empress) than with any other Government, as affording a better guarantee for the future. Encouraged by these sentiments, Boyer inquired on what conditions the Army of the Rhine—"which still adhered to the Emperor, and would have nothing to do with the Republic of the Paris advocates"—would be allowed to leave Metz. On this point there was grave diversity of opinion at the royal head-quarters in Versailles. The military men were unanimous in demanding the surrender of the fortress, on the same terms as that of Sedan; but Bismarck here interposed, and pointed out to the King the political and diplomatic aspects of the question, which the Generals were too apt to ignore.* And in the long run, too, he carried his point against them. His conditions were:—

Negotiations with the Bonapartists.

1. That the Army at Metz should declare its continued adhesion to the Empire;

* At a dinner after the Council which discussed the question of Metz' Bismarck said:—"It is very annoying that every plan I have must first be talked over with five or six persons, who understand very little about the matter, and yet whose objections I must listen to and meet politely. Thus I have lately had to give up three whole days to settle a matter which under other circumstances, I could have finished in three minutes. It is just as if I were to give my advice about the placing of a battery here or there, and as if the embarrassed officer had to give an explanation to me who know nothing of his business." "—— has an excellent head, and I am convinced that whatever he might have undertaken he would have become something exceedingly respectable in it. But having occupied himself for years only with one and the same thing, he has now feeling and interest for that alone."

It is, perhaps, not too much to assume that the name left blank in the last sentence but one of the above quotation from Dr. Busch, is none other than that of — "Moltke!"

2. That the Empress-Regent should simultaneously invite the French people to pronounce on the form of government they wished to adopt; and,

3. That the basis of a treaty of peace should be signed by a delegate of the Regency.

On these conditions Bismarck was willing to let the Army of Metz retire

"to some district agreed upon by a military convention, there to serve as a rallying point for the depositaries of public power existing by virtue of the Constitution of May, 1870, and to consult them as to confirming the mandate conferred upon the Government of the Regency by the Empire on the strength of that Constitution." *

Returning to Metz with this ultimatum, General Boyer was next sent to England to lay it before the

* This was the account of his mission to Versailles given by General Boyer at a Conference, 18th October, on his return to Metz (Bazaine, p. 216); and in his written report he says:—

"Bismarck me dit que les généraux, ainsi qu'il s'y était bien attendu, avaient spontanément déclaré qu'ils ne renonceraient pas à l'exigence d'une capitulation dans les termes de celle de Sedan, telle que le voulait leur intérêt militaire; il avait alors pris la parole et répresenté au Roi que, sans préjudice de l'intérêt militaire, il devait aussi faire ressortir l'intérêt politique et diplomatique, dans la question dont il s'agissait. Il fut alors convenu que, pour le moment, *on laisserait de côté toute idée de capitulation et que le but à atteindre serait d'obtenir l'assurance que l'armée de Metz voulait rester fidèle à son serment et se faisait le champion de la dynastie impériale. Le Maréchal produirait un acte public, par lequel il le ferait bien comprendre afin que le pays sût qu'il pouvait compter sur son appui, s'il voulait se rallier autour de la Régence.* De cette façon, l'armée prendrait un engagement qui la compromettrait vis-à-vis du parti républicain, et M. de Bismarck verrait l'effet produit en France par cette déclaration. A cela se joindrait un manifeste de l'Impératrice qui, sûre d'avoir un appui dans l'armée de Metz, ferait un appel à la nation, revendiquerait ses droits et demanderait de nouveau au peuple français de les consacrer par un vote. Alors seulement, on pourrait traiter avec chance de voir réussir un plan qui amènerait la paix générale et arrêterait l'effusion du sang. Tandis que dans les conditions actuelles, tout est aléatoire."

Empress. Her Majesty replied (through Count Bernstorff) by demanding a fortnight's truce with permission to provision Metz, and by declaring that she would never consent to a diminution of French territory (as the basis of a treaty of peace).* Hereupon King William wrote to the Empress (25th October) declining to continue the negotiation; while Bismarck telegraphed (24th), through Prince Frederick Charles, to Marshal Bazaine "that the proposals reaching him from London were absolutely unacceptable, and that, to his great regret, he no longer saw any chance of arriving at any result by political negotiations."

Fall of Metz.

Within four days after this, famine-stricken, disease-consumed, and despairing Metz had unconditionally surrendered; and the Army of the Rhine, consisting of about 173,000 men, including 3 field-marshals, 50 generals, and 6,000 officers, with more than 1,400 various kinds of guns and immense quantities of other arms and military stores—this army, the last hope and stay of the Empire, fell into the hands of the Germans. At Sedan, the Empire had been seriously, though not mortally wounded. It was now stone-dead; but still, it is interesting to speculate as to what might have been the future of France, had Bazaine and the Empress accepted the terms on which Bismarck was willing to allow the moribund Empire the benefit of medico-military treatment. Finding, at last, that it could not be galvanised into life enough to hold a valid treaty-signing pen, he gave it the *coup de grâce* and set

* Official History of the War by the Grand General Staff.

to nursing the infant Republic out of its nonage, the sooner to have in it a responsible party to the peace which was his sole and only aim.

As early as the 9th October, a week before the arrival of General Boyer at Versailles, and little more than a fortnight after the failure of the armistice negotiations with Favre at Ferrières, Bismarck of his own accord had offered the Paris Government a fresh opportunity of freeing France, by means of the elections, from an anarchy which rendered peace negotiations impossible.* This generous offer was communicated to the Paris Government by the American General Burnside, but he soon returned to Versailles disappointed of his mediatorial hopes, and with the impression that Paris was nothing but a mere "Bedlam of monkeys."† Immediately afterwards, M. Gambetta—the chief "*fou furieux*" in all this "*hôpital de fous*"—left Paris in a balloon, and the first thing he did on reaching the earth was to protest against the popular elections (to the Constituent Assembly), which had been originally fixed for the 2nd October, but postponed till the 16th. The

Bismarck offers an armistice; a "Bedlam of monkeys."

* "We declared ourselves ready to grant an armistice of sufficient length for the elections to take place, and at the same time to permit all the deputies of the nation to enter Paris unhindered, or the Parisian deputies to pass out of the city, in case another place should be chosen as the seat of the Assembly."—*Bismarck's Despatch to Count Bernstorff, 28th October.*

† "Le Comte Bismarck," wrote General Boyer in his Report to Bazaine on his mission to Versailles, "Le Comte revient sur l'opinion des généraux Américains; ils sont repartis exaspérés, disant qu'ils avaient cru entrer dans un hôpital de fous habité par des singes."—"*Episodes de la Guerre de* 1870, *etc., par l'ex-Maréchal Bazaine.*"

Provisional Government was still evidently resolved not to negotiate till the last German had been driven from the soil of France; so there was plainly nothing left for the Germans but to compel a satisfactory peace by force of arms, even though Paris itself should be overwhelmed by the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Louder and louder, therefore, did the railway bridges begin to creak and groan under the weight of the huge siege-guns which, with their mountain-stores of volcano-fuel, were being swiftly transported from Germany to rain relentless fire and iron on the doomed yet dogged city. And so terribly in earnest seemed the Germans, and so loud and alarming grew the beleaguering pother, that Europe began to shudder at the idea of the frightful and unexampled catastrophe about to befall the city which Victor Hugo once called the "brain of the universe," but which an English writer thought might be more appropriately described as its "stomach;" that fair and much-frequented world-city, with its millions of innocent inhabitants, and its priceless treasures of art, science, and historical associations. Europe, we say, was moved with pity and alarm, and its feelings were expressed by Lord Granville who, like another Abraham interceding for the cities of the plain, made a final and almost suppliant appeal to Prussia on behalf of beleaguered Paris.* Bismarck again admitted the enormity of the disaster which a bombardment of Paris would entail, but pointed out that every other means of bringing the

Lord Granville intercedes, in vain, for beleaguered Paris.

* Despatch to Lord A. Loftus (Ambassador at Berlin), 20th October.

"Bedlam" city to its senses had been exhausted; that the frequent advances he had made to the Government of National Defence had been invariably rejected; and that, therefore, it was impossible for him to take the initiative in new negotiations.*

But he was spared the trouble, for, yielding at last to the solicitations of the neutral Powers, M. Thiers arrived at Versailles, on the 31st October (having been previously admitted to Paris to confer with the Government) to treat for an armistice, which again had for its object the convocation of a National Assembly. This was the second formal attempt of the French to negotiate a truce, and, like the previous effort of Jules Favre, it failed. It is surely not necessary to detail a transaction which ended in smoke, all we want to know being that it did thus end. Bismarck "received M. Thiers with the respectful courtesy to which, independently of our former relations, he is so fully entitled by his distinguished antecedents."† Their conferences lasted nearly

M. Thiers treats with Bismarck, to no purpose.

* Despatch to Count Bernstorff (before quoted) 25th October.

† Bismarck's Circular on the Armistice Negotiation with M. Thiers, on the subject of which he further wrote:—"After duly considering this proposal, his Majesty arrived at the conclusion that any armistice would be fraught with those injuries to Germany which must result from the prolongation of war to an army whose provisions have to be brought from a great distance. An armistice would, moreover, oblige us to arrest the progress of the large body of the troops set free by the capitulation of Metz, and to forego the occupation of the vast territory which now may be taken possession of without striking a blow, or after overcoming but slight resistance. Again, the German armies are not likely to receive any very considerable reinforcements during the next few weeks; whereas an armistice would have enabled France to develop her resources, complete the organisation of her troops, and, in the event of hostilities being resumed on the

a week, and their result was thus summarised in a telegram from Versailles, which embodies all we want to know about them:—

"In the five days' negotiations with M. Thiers, the offer of an armistice was repeatedly made to him on the basis of the maintenance of the military *status quo*, the armistice to last any time up to twenty-eight days, for the purpose of holding the elections; the same also to be held in the occupied parts of France. He was, however, after frequent consultation with the Paris Government, not empowered to accept either one or the other; and he demanded before all the provisioning of Paris, without being able to offer any military equivalent (such as the cession of one or two forts). This demand being considered unacceptable by the Germans from a military point of view, M. Thiers yesterday received notice from Paris to break off the negotiations."

"These negotiations," wrote Bismarck,

"have convinced me that the present rulers of France never intended to allow the French nation to speak out through its elected representatives, and that they as little wished to effect an armistice, but put forward a condition which they must have known would be unacceptable, merely to avoid giving a direct refusal to the neutral Powers, on whose assistance they count."

"The time has now come," wrote M. Thiers, on the other hand,

"for the neutral Powers to judge whether sufficient attention has been paid to their advice; but it is not we, at least, whom they can reproach with having disregarded it."

expiry of the truce, to oppose to us forces capable of making resistance which at present are not in existence. Notwithstanding these considerations, his Majesty allowed himself to be influenced by his wish to receive the French propositions in a friendly spirit, and to promote the restoration of peace."

Thus, then, did France once more fall back on her false-heroic policy of frantic resistance to the knife; while the Germans, on their part, calmly conscious of their irresistible strength, proceeded to fasten ever more compulsive bonds and sobering straps on the Bedlamised country. But while the army of Prince Frederick Charles, now released from its beleaguering watch at Metz, is marching on Orleans in the west to scatter to the winds the undisciplined levies which the Dictator of Tours is conjuring, as it were, out of the very ground by the magic words of his patriotic eloquence; while Manteuffel of the Iron Hand, which has now relaxed its grasp on re-conquered Strasburg, is smiting down all opposition in the Belfort-Dijon region—where Garibaldi and his republican rabble are vainly endeavouring to dam the Teutonic wave of invasion; and while the Paris garrison, like a captive eagle, is dinting its breast with bootless wounds by dashing itself in desperate fury against the bars of its iron cage—while all these military interludes are in progress, let us turn our attention to the further course of the diplomatic action which now formed the real drama of the war.

Resistance to the knife.

On the very day (31st October) when M. Thiers arrived at Versailles to treat for a truce, but vainly as we have seen, a notable thing was happening at St. Petersburg. For on that day Prince Gortchakoff stood forth and boldly declared to bewildered Europe that Russia was resolved to be no longer bound by the Paris Treaty of 1856, which, among

The Black Sea Clause.

other things, restricted Russia's naval action in the Black Sea—to all intents and purposes a Russian lake.* "*La Russie ne boude pas, elle se recueille*"—such was the watchword adopted by Prince Gortchakoff on taking office after the Crimean War. Under him Russia had, indeed, collected herself for the desired opportunity which was now come; and with an easy effort she had suddenly, and with a resounding clash, shaken off the fetters imposed upon her by her foes in the hour of her helpless prostration and defeat. By her neutral, yet watchful attitude—eye on Vienna, with hand on sword-hilt—Russia had prevented Austria from falling on the flank of struggling Germany. Again, on receiving the news of Sedan at Moscow, the Czar had given a banquet and drunk the health of his royal uncle of Prussia with Highland honours; and he had conferred his highest decoration—the Order of St. George—on Moltke, the winner of that unparalleled victory. The Czar had done all this and more, and he was now to reap the reward of his attachment to the cause of Prussia.

To Mr. Odo Russell (afterwards Lord Ampthill), the British Agent at Versailles, Bismarck avowed that Gortchakoff's Circular had come upon him as a surprise,

* Circular note of Prince Gortchakoff, dated Zarskoe Selo, $\frac{1}{31}$ October, 1870. One article of the Treaty of Paris declared: "The Black Sea is neutralised; its waters and its ports, thrown open to the mercantile marine of every nation, are formally and in perpetuity interdicted to the flag of war either of the Powers possessing its coasts, or of any other Power." By a subsequent provision the number of ships of war maintainable by Russia in the Euxine was restricted to a minimum.

and that, though he had always held the Treaty of 1856 to be unjustifiably hard on Russia, he not only deemed the present moment inopportune for its revision, but also disapproved the way in which she proposed to effect this.* It must be assumed, we think, that this was nothing but diplomatic language adapted to the exigencies of the moment; for if anything is morally certain, it is that there had existed for some considerable time already a tacit understanding between Russia and Prussia on the subject of the Treaty of Paris. This understanding took something like definite shape when General Manteuffel repaired on a secret mission to St. Petersburg at the close of the Bohemian campaign; and there can be little doubt that it again formed the subject of conversation between the Czar and King William when, with their respective Chancellors, they met at Ems, it may be remembered, shortly before the arrival there of M. Benedetti. But in giving Russia to understand that, for a consideration, and at the fitting opportunity, she was ready to connive at her abrogation of the Black Sea Clause, Prussia had done no more than both Austria and France had already sought to do. Each of these Powers had repeatedly offered to purchase Russia's assistance against Germany by helping her to annul the obnoxious Treaty; † and

"Do ut des."

* Mr. Odo Russell to Lord Granville, 23rd October.

† "It cannot be denied that at one time Count Beust offered to purchase Russia's assistance against Germany by contributing to do away with the objectionable treaty, and that he saw so little to conceal in this act that he caused his Notes on the subject, dated January 1, January 22, and February 3, 1867, to be publicly printed. Nor is it less certain that General Fleury, on behalf of the Emperor Napoleon, approached the Russian Court

we may assume that, in preferring Prussia as her passive accomplice in the work of repudiation, Russia was mainly influenced by considerations which rule the business of an auction-room. Prussia stood indebted to her Northern neighbour, and it was now her part to return the favour which had been shown her. Russia, of course, had most interest in the nullification of the Black Sea Clause, just as England was the Power mainly concerned in its observance. Not only, however, was Prussia bound to Russia by the ties of gratitude, but her feelings towards England were at the time somewhat cooled by a shade of passing estrangement.

Germany offended with England.

Of this estrangement the causes were various. It was generally believed in Germany that England had not done all she could to prevent the outbreak of a war which was carried on to a certain degree in her interest; for, had Napoleon conquered, he certainly would have seized Belgium, and then what would England have done for her *protégé*?* Drawn the sword, or submitted to the humiliation of a French revenge for Waterloo? Furthermore, the repeated efforts of England to mediate between the belligerents were construed by the suspicious Germans as nothing but envious endeavours to rob them of the legitimate fruits of their victories, and arrest them

with the like overtures in 1869 and 1870, sufficient proof of which is to be found in the papers and political transactions of those days, as also in the correspondence recently discovered in the Tuileries, and published by the Republican Government."—*Berlin "Times" Correspondent.*

* This seems the fitting place to remark that, in compliance with public opinion which had been so excited by the revelation of the Benedetti Treaty,

in the day of their success.* Again, public feeling in Germany towards England was irritated by alleged breaches of her neutrality on the part of those of her subjects who scrupled not to traffic with the French in contraband of war, a subject on which there took place a rather heated correspondence between the Cabinets of London and Berlin.† The case for Great Britain was capable of being argued, as, indeed, it was very well argued by Lord Granville. But Luxemburg had not a leg to stand upon; and yet when Bismarck threatened the Grand Ducal Government with reprisals for the

the English Government lost no time in pressing upon both France and Prussia a new Treaty (9th of August, 1870) by which these two Powers bound themselves jointly and severally with England to maintain the independence of Belgium, and to take up arms against any State invading it.

* One day, according to Dr. Busch, the Chancellor said:—"That is an unheard-of proceeding on the part of the English! They wanted (Odo Russell intimated as much, but the Chief refused it, as not permissible) to send a gunboat up the Seine, as they say, to fetch away such of the English families there as wished to come. They really want to see whether we have laid down torpedoes." "They are out of humour because we have fought great battles here, and won them by ourselves. They grudge the little shabby Prussian his rise in the world. They look upon us as a people who are only here to make war for their convenience."

† "Count Bismarck," wrote Lord A. Loftus to Earl Granville (30th July), "stated that the leniency of her Majesty's Government in this matter had caused him deep regret, and that it was producing not only great irritation, but a feeling of indignation among all classes of the population towards England. 'It has always been my wish,' said Count Bismarck to me to-day, 'to maintain the most cordial relations with England, and I have ever been anxious that the same feeling of amity should bind together our respective nations. But if these acts of unfriendly feeling continue towards us, a soreness will arise on the part of the German nation which will not easily be removed. We are not in a position,' said his Excellency, 'like the Americans, to hold menacing language, or to take steps to protect our interests, but the injury to the good-feeling of the German nation towards England will not be the less great.'"

flagrant infringement of its neutrality, his Lordship made bold to suppose that, before marching troops into the Grand Duchy, the Chancellor would take previous counsel of the guaranteeing Powers (who signed the Treaty of 1867). "No," replied Bismarck in substance, "it would never occur to me to do any such thing."

Bismarck argues with Mr. Odo Russell.

We have thus referred to the causes, real or fanciful, of German irritation against England during the war; and that this passing irritation was to some extent shared by Bismarck himself, appears from what he said of his negotiations at Versailles with Mr. Odo Russell on the subject of the Black Sea Clause.

"He asked me," said Bismarck,* "whether we could not adhere *simpliciter* to the agreement of April 16, 1856. I told him that Germany had no real interest in doing so. Or whether we might not pledge ourselves to remain neutral, if it came to a conflict? I said I was no friend of conjectural politics, under which class such a pledge would come; and that it would all depend on the circumstances. At present we saw no reason to trouble ourselves about it. That ought to be enough for him. For the rest, I was not of opinion that gratitude should be without its place in politics. The present Emperor (of Russia) had always shown himself friendly and well-disposed to us; while Austria had never been trustworthy, and had occasionally even been very double-faced. As for England, he knew well enough how much we had to thank her for. The friendliness of the Emperor, I said, was a relic of the old relationship which originated partly in family connections; but it rested also on recognition of the fact that our interests were not in collision with his. Nobody knew how that might be in future, and it was better not to talk about it." . . . "Our position, I represented, was different from what it had been. We were the only Power that had reason to

* According to Dr. Busch.

be content; we had no call to do anybody a favour when we did not know whether he would do us a service in return."

It does not fall within the scope of our narrative to detail and examine the reasons by which Russia sought to justify her withdrawal from a solemn contract.* We need only say that, in like circumstances, any other Government would in all probability have acted in a similar manner; but it is the business of statesmen to look at events from the particular point of view of their own country, and consequently Lord Granville lost no time in remonstrating with the high-handed conduct of the Colossus of the North. As for Bismarck, he merely smiled in his sleeve, and expressed to Mr. Odo Russell his regret at not being able to answer the Russian Circular at all. How, indeed, could he, and what could he say, even if he were to make a semblance of doing so? England, protested Lord Granville, on the other hand, could not admit the right of Russia to repudiate in this cavalierly manner a Treaty from which she could only be set free by the collective assent of the co-signatory Powers; and he hinted, with a well-feigned appearance of seriousness, at future complications and the like. "Future complications!" exclaimed Bismarck, with a contemptuous smile, on receiving his Lordship's despatch;

And smiles at the covert threats of Lord Granville.

"parliamentary speechifyers, who will risk nothing. The stress lies on the word 'future.' That is the sort of talk when people

* "The Emperor," wrote Prince Gortchakoff to all the foreign agents of the Czar, "commands you to declare that his Imperial Majesty cannot any longer hold himself bound by those stipulations of the Treaty of March 30, 1856, which restrict the exercise of his sovereign rights in the Black Sea."

mean to do nothing. No, nothing is to be feared from these people now, as nothing was to be hoped of them four months ago. Had the English said to Napoleon at the beginning of the war, 'None of your fighting!' we should not be having war now."*

Resolved as Bismarck, therefore, was to let the Russians have their own way, and even help them to attain it, his only care was how to do this in the manner least objectionable to England. The Black Sea Clause had been knocked on the head, and was already as dead as a door-nail; but there was no reason why it should be flung into a ditch like a dog, and not interred with the decent ceremony of undertakers' woe. There is nothing like an open grave, and a common object of grief, for reconciling estranged kinsmen. Thus, too, doubtless thought Bismarck, when he proposed that the Powers should meet and wail a doleful dirge over the lamented body of their lifeless offspring. Ingenious idea! A coroner's inquest, in the shape of a diplomatic Conference, to sit on the murdered body of the Black Sea Clause!

On the 17th January, 1871, the inquest was formally opened in London; and the European jurymen

* Dr. Busch, writing under date 17th November:—"The Russians," added the Chancellor, "ought not to have been so modest in their requirements. If they had asked for more, they would have had no difficulty in getting what they want about the Black Sea." . . . "People have always said that the Russian policy is diabolically artful—full of shuffles and quirks and dodges. It is nothing of the kind. Dishonest people would have made no such declaration; they would have gone on quietly building war ships in the Black Sea and waited till somebody asked them about it. Then they would have said they knew nothing about it, they had 'sent to inquire,' and they would have wriggled out. They might have kept that sort of thing up a long time in Russia, till at last everybody had got used to things as they were."

were gravely informed by the coroner (Lord Granville) that they had all met without any foregone conclusion as to their verdict, and with perfect freedom of speech and action. With one accord they then all affirmed the abstract principle that no State could quash its engagements without the concurrence of the other contracting parties; and the path of business being thus smoothed by a fiction and a formula, the Conference ended * by releasing Russia from those engagements from which she had already released herself. International law had triumphed over autocratic caprice, and Europe had been spared the horrors of a universal war. The coroner's jury had returned a verdict of "Found Dead," adding that there was no evidence to show that a murder had been committed. No greater farce had ever been played under the sun; but England, in the circumstances, had plainly no other alternative than to take the leading part in it.

A coroner's inquest on a murdered Treaty.

The curtain rose on the farce of the Black Sea Conference, as we have said, on the 17th January, as if by psychological contrast to predispose the mind of Europe for the grand historical and spectacular drama to be performed at Versailles on the following day. We must, therefore, now recur to that thread of our narrative which will lead us up to one of the most significant and important events of modern times—the proclamation of the new German Empire. We have seen that, with the pæans of triumph with which the news of Sedan was received throughout all

Progress of German unity.

* The Conference had five sittings, extending to the 13th March.

Germany, were commingled shouts for the immediate consummation of the national unity. The issue of the war was now certain, but the German people were too impatient to wait for its fruit until the complete fall of the tree. The fruit was already ripe, and, if not at once plucked, it might drop and be spoilt.

But, true to the principle which had guided him since Königgrätz, Bismarck did not even now seek to precipitate the action of the South. It was inferred that his main reason for having hitherto forborne to do this, was a desire to deprive France of a welcome pretext for a quarrel; but it was now seen that this could no longer be his motive, and that he was simply guided by the common-sense maxim that a union, whether of States or of persons, can only be happy and prosperous if spontaneous. But there was now no necessity whatever for compulsion; for the Southern people rose and, like the men of Israel when they entreated Samuel for a King, cried out to their rulers to give them a Kaiser.

Listening to the voice of their peoples, the rulers of Würtemberg and Bavaria, of Hesse and of Baden, invited Bismarck to treat with them for their immediate entrance into the Confederation of the North. The negotiations were conducted both at Munich and Versailles, and there were times when Bismarck's heart sank within him, for the South was not so much carried away by the enthusiasm of the time as to offer itself unconditionally. Bavaria, in particular, insisted on a settlement which showed that she was inclined to look upon her union with the

The South at last knocks at the door of the North.

North more as a marriage of convenience than as a marriage of love; but Bismarck was wise enough to console himself for the lack of sentiment with the solid aspects of the agreement. The conditions under which Bavaria offered herself to her Northern wooer did not at all accord with his ideal of perfect union; but here again the Chancellor's practical sense triumphed over the doctrinaire demands of some of his countrymen. Better imperfect unity, he thought, than none at all. Better a few clauses in the marriage settlement unfavourable to the bridegroom, than stipulations that would prove the source of everlasting discontent and nagging on the part of the jealous bride.

We hear of Bismarck being worried and kept awake at nights by the dragging of the negotiations, which at one time actually threatened to come to grief "on the question of shoulder-straps;" and was the stone of Sisyphus again to rebound to the foot of the hill, just as it had reached its summit? But at last the Treaties of Union were signed, and we cannot do better than generalise the genesis of their contents by quoting the following from the speech delivered by Minister Delbrück, on the 5th December, when he laid them for ratification before the North German Parliament, now met for the last time:—

Conditions of union.

"You are aware that, on the Southern States signifying their intention of joining the Northern Alliance, I was instructed to open negotiations with them. Bavaria had taken the initiative, and to Munich I went. In acquitting myself of this task, I was directed to avoid all that could be interpreted as implying a wish to exercise

the very slightest pressure upon the Southern States. Our discussions at Munich were greatly promoted by the presence of a Plenipotentiary representing the Kingdom of Würtemberg. On the negotiations being subsequently continued at Versailles, the Baden and Hesse Governments addressed corresponding overtures to His Majesty's Government; with this difference, however, that whereas Bavaria and Würtemberg asked for some modification of the Federal Charter, which should regulate their position in the new commonwealth, the two other Cabinets simply moved for admission to the Confederacy as it stood. The negotiations with Bavaria, not leading to a speedy conclusion, were suspended for some time, but eventually resulted in the treaties now submitted for your sanction. In the treaties with Würtemberg, Baden, and Hesse, some clauses have been inserted at the instance of Bavaria, which, had they not been insisted upon by the Munich Government, would probably not have been demanded by the States immediately concerned. These clauses refer to the relations between the Southern States and the central Government, giving them a position privileged, it is true, but not at variance with the essential requirements of unity.

"Some of you may be of opinion that the unity thus attained is not sufficiently close; but in consenting to it we were convinced that we were securing that which was indispensable, and might confidently leave future developments to the Federal Council and Parliament. You will, moreover, admit that the larger the States entering into the Confederacy, the more natural was it for us to leave them in the enjoyment of a certain amount of independence. After all, the primary requisite of unity, which is the creation of a united German army, has been secured. Even the King of Bavaria, who has an exceptional position granted him, has engaged to organise his army upon the Federal pattern, and in time of war to place it unconditionally at the disposal of the Federal Commander-in-Chief. If Prussia has renounced the right to declare war, and allowed this supreme privilege to be vested in the Federal Council, we were prompted to make this concession by the consideration that the Confederacy will be an alliance chiefly for defensive purposes. At the same time, we do not think that this concession, or even that other one by which a standing Committee on Foreign Affairs is established in the Federal Council, will have power materially to alter the existing state of things.

"The wishes of the Southern Governments have been likewise acceded to in some smaller matters. . . We have left to the Southern States also the direction of their posts and telegraphs in time of peace, and do not object to Bavaria retaining the supervision of her railways. As the Southern States did not wish to part with a prerogative so long exercised by them, and moreover engaged to conform to our rules in the administration of these departments, we should not, in our opinion, have been justified in wounding their feelings by a peremptory demand. . . In conclusion, I have to remark that most of the Federal laws passed since the establishment of the Confederacy will, under the new treaties, be introduced into the South either at once or shortly. In forming an opinion on these treaties, you will, I have no doubt, remember that though the Federal ties have not been so tightly drawn as some have expected, they are sufficiently close for the reunion which the nation is engaged in gradually achieving. We had to accommodate ourselves to existing realities, and put up with what was good when perfection could not be attained. The having acted differently on previous occasions did not certainly turn out to the advantage of Germany. Let us be discreet this time."

Some opposition to the treaties was manifested by the unity party, which demanded still more centralised institutions; but a telegram from Bismarck, threatening to resign rather than submit to any alteration in the new compacts, produced an overwhelming majority in his favour, and Germany at last was One. In the same sitting, Herr Delbrück communicated a letter from the King of Bavaria * to King

Germany united.

* The following is the King of Bavaria's letter to King William, which deserves to be transcribed here: "After the adhesion of Southern Germany to the German Constitutional Alliance, the presidential rights vested in your Majesty will extend over all German States. In consenting to those rights being vested in a single hand, I have been influenced by the conviction that the interests of the whole German Fatherland and its allied Sovereigns will be effectually promoted by this arrangement. I trust that the rights constitutionally possessed by the President of the Confederacy

William, begging him, in the name of his fellow Sovereigns, to assume the Imperial title as head of the new Confederation; and an address was passed praying His Majesty "to consecrate the work of unification by accepting the Imperial crown of Germany." Standing in the grand reception-room of the Prefecture at Versailles on Sunday, 18th December, after divine worship, the King, with the Crown Prince on his right, Bismarck on his left, and a crowd of Princes and Generals around, received this address which was presented to him by a deputation of the Reichstag, headed by President Simson; and His Majesty replied that, as soon as he was assured of the assent of his ruling brothers to the proposal of the King of Bavaria, he would comply with the united request of his peers and of the people. His predecessor had refused the Imperial crown, offered him by the Frankfort Parliament, on the

will, by the restoration of the German Empire and the German Imperial dignity, be recognised as rights exercised by your Majesty in the name of the entire Fatherland, and by virtue of the agreement effected between its Princes. I have therefore proposed to the German Sovereigns, conjointly with myself, to suggest to your Majesty that the possession of the presidential rights of the Confederacy be coupled with the Imperial title. As soon as I have been informed of the resolutions of your Majesty and the allied Princes, I shall direct my Government to take steps to effect a formal agreement on the subject.—LUDWIG." Simultaneously with the above, the King of Bavaria addressed to the King of Saxony, and all other German Sovereigns and Free Towns, a letter inviting them to join with him in urging on the King of Prussia that the exercise of his presidential rights be united with the title of Emperor. "It is to me," he added, "a sublime thought that I can feel myself called upon, both by my position in Germany and by the history of my country, to take the first step towards crowning the work of German unity; and I entertain the joyful hope that your Royal Majesty will accord to me your friendly assent."

ground that it was proffered to him on insufficient legal title; but, now that both the Sovereigns and the subjects of the Fatherland had signed the deed of gift, he could not but look upon the conveyance as valid. Yet there was some doubt in His Majesty's precise mind as to the proper form of his supreme title.

"The King," said Bismarck one day, "still has his difficulties between 'German Emperor' and 'Emperor of Germany,' but he rather inclines to the latter. I cannot see much difference between the two. It is a little like the question of the *Homoousians* and the *Homoiousians*, in the days of the Councils." On another occasion, when the conversation drifted into a learned discussion on the same subject, Bismarck asked: "Does any gentleman know the Latin for sausage?" "*Farcimentum*," replied one. "*Farcimen*," said another. "*Farcimentum vel farcimen*, whichever you please," said the Chief, smiling, "*nescio quid mihi magis farcimentum esset*" (I don't know which of the two I should consider the more made-up name). At last, however, "German Emperor" was decided on, and the 18th January, 1871—the anniversary of the day on which the first King of Prussia had crowned himself at Königsberg (1701)—was fixed for the ceremonious assumption of the title in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.*

"*Farcimen vel farcimentum?*"

* "To spare the feelings of the minor Sovereigns, the new title is not 'Emperor of Germany'" (as it is given in the English Press, and even in passports furnished by the British Embassy at Berlin!), "but 'German Emperor.' 'Emperor of Germany' would imply that the territories of the other Sovereigns are situate in a land belonging to the owner of the

Proclamation of the Empire.

Was it possible for the boldest imagination to picture a more thorough revenge on the traditional foes of Germany, than the proclamation of the German Empire in the storied Palace of the Kings of France? History presents us with many dramatic contrasts, and with many astounding episodes, but with none like this. With the shades of Richelieu, and the Grand Monarch, and the Destroyer of the Holy Roman Reich looking down upon them, did the Teutonic chieftains raise their heroic leader on their shields, as it were, and with clash of arms and of martial music acclaim him Kaiser of a re-united Germany. There was clash of arms and of martial music, but there were also hymns of praise and heartfelt prayer, such as was probably never before breathed in the halls emblazoned with *toutes les gloires de la France.* "*Le Roi gouverne par lui-même,*" shone inscribed on the ceiling of the Salle

title; 'German Emperor' simply means the head of the German nationality. In this country punctiliousness in such matters is traditional. When the Electors of Brandenburg first assumed the royal title they were not in a position to couple it with the name of their oldest province, because this belonged to the Empire, in which there could exist but one king, viz. the 'King of the Germans and Holy Roman Emperor.' Hence they had to take the title from the province of Prussia, a colony, but not an integral portion, of the German Empire in those days. Even this distinction was not exact enough. To leave no doubt as to the fact of their not being kings within the limits of the Empire, they were obliged to call themselves 'Kings *in* Prussia,' not *of* Prussia. Only after the victories of Frederick the Great the significant *of* was substituted for the guarded *in*. The Austrian Emperor of Germany by that time had become too much of a cipher to be able to assert his ancient supremacy."—"*Times*" *Berlin Correspondent.* It may here be mentioned that the King himself never became so enamoured of his new title as his subjects, and to the last the officers of his household more frequently referred to His Majesty as "*der König*" than as "*der Kaiser.*"

des Glaces; but the Kings of Prussia, said the preacher, had risen to greatness by adopting a very different motto: "The kings of the earth reign under me, saith the Lord."

It was after listening to a discourse on this text that King William turned from the altar—which was surrounded by a war-worn and brilliant multitude of Princes, Generals, officers, and troops, representing almost all portions of the German army in the field.* The King turned from the altar to a platform at the end of the hall, where waved a dense and variegated bower of regimental colours which had led the way to victory at Wörth and Weissenburg, at Mars-la-Tour, at Gravelotte, at Beaumont, and at Sedan. On His Majesty's left stood Bismarck, "looking pale but calm and self-possessed, elevated as it were, by some internal force which caused all eyes to turn on the great figure with that indomitable face, where the will seems to be master and lord of all."† Standing before the colours

* In a semi-circle round the King, stood the Crown Prince of Prussia, Prince Charles of Prussia, Prince Adalbert of Prussia, the Crown Prince of Saxony, Prince George of Saxony; the Grand Dukes of Baden, Saxony, and Oldenburg; the Dukes of Coburg, Meiningen, and Altenburg; Princes Otto, Luitpold, and Leopold of Bavaria; Princes Wilhelm and August of Würtemberg; Dukes Eugen, and Eugen the younger of Würtemberg; the Crown Princes of Saxe-Weimar, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Meiningen, and Anhalt; the Princes of Schaumburg-Lippe and Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt; the Hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern, the Landgrave of Hesse, the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, the Princes of Wied, Putbus, Lynar, Pless, Reuss, Croy, and Biron of Courland. Close to them were the Generals and Ministers, among them the English Military Agent, General Walker; the English Political Agent, Mr. Odo Russell; and the Russian Military Plenipotentiary, &c.

† Dr. Russell.

the King announced the re-establishment of the Empire, and then Bismarck stepped forth and read aloud the following Proclamation to the German People:—

"We William, by God's grace King of Prussia, hereby announce, that the German Princes and Free Towns having addressed to us a unanimous request to revive the German Imperial dignity, which has now been sixty years in abeyance, and the requisite provisions having been inserted in the Constitution of the German Confederation, we regard it as a duty we owe to the Fatherland to comply with this invitation, and to accept the dignity of Emperor.

"Accordingly, we and our successors to the crown of Prussia henceforth shall use the Imperial title in all the relations and affairs of the German Empire, and we hope that it may be vouchsafed to the German nation to enjoy a blessed future, under the symbols of its ancient greatness. We assume the Imperial dignity conscious of the duty we have to protect with German loyalty the rights of the Empire and its members, to preserve peace, to maintain the independence of Germany, and to strengthen the power of the people. We accept it in the hope that it will be granted to the German people to enjoy in lasting peace the reward of its arduous and heroic struggles within boundaries that will give to the Fatherland that security against renewed French attacks which it has lacked for centuries.

"May God grant to us and our successors to the Imperial crown that we may be the champions * of the German Empire at all times, not in martial conquests, but in works of peace, in the sphere of national prosperity, freedom, and civilisation."

"Long live the Emperor William," cried His Majesty's son-in-law, the Grand Duke of Baden; the bands burst forth with the national anthem, colours and helmets were wildly waved, and the Hall of Mirrors shook with a tremendous shout, which was taken up and swelled without

The proudest day of Bismarck's life.

* The phrase used in the original is "*Mehrer des Deutschen Reichs*"—a translation of the old Latin title "*Auctor Imperii.*"

till the rippling thunder-roll of cheers struck the ears of the startled watchers on the walls of Paris. Every heart was moved, and every eye suffused with emotion. It was a great and never-to-be-forgotten moment. Little wonder that the Emperor-King, in embracing his son and in pressing the hand of his Chancellor, could not suppress his tears. The descendant of a ruler who, little more than a century and a half ago, had struggled into the rank of Kings amid the jeers and contempt of Europe, he was now the Emperor of the mightiest and most dreaded nation on the Continent. It was, perhaps, in the pious nature of His Majesty to ascribe this wonderful result more directly to the favour of Heaven than to the genius of his Chancellor; but the latter doubtless felt rewarded enough with the feelings of pride which must have welled up within his breast as, to the stirring strains of the Great Frederick's "Hohenfriedberg March," he passed out of the Hall of Mirrors to sit at the banqueting board of the Kaiser of his own creating. His work had been completed. It was the proudest day of his life, as it had also been the most trying, so it was not surprising that, at its close, "he spoke with an unusually weak voice, and seemed tired and exhausted."*

But loud as had been the shouts which acclaimed the birth of the new Empire, they were outvoiced by

* In describing the Proclamation of the Empire we have mainly relied on the Prussian official account of the ceremony, as well as on the huge, historically accurate, and splendid painting of the event (by an eye-witness, Professor Anton von Werner) which adorns the wall of one of the largest apartments in the Schloss at Berlin.

the thunder of the cannon that were now by day and night roaring out to stubborn Paris their summons of surrender. The bombardment, for which Bismarck had so ardently longed, had at last begun (5th January). None had been so impatient for the employment of this extreme measure as the man of blood and iron, and none were more indignant with the soft-hearted advocates of delay, among whom, it was rumoured, were ladies of the highest station in Berlin. "What lies nearest my heart just now," he said towards the end of November, "is what may be going on at the Villa Coublay" (where the siege-artillery was parked). "Only give me the command-in-chief for twenty-four hours, and I should just give one order—'Fire!'" But owing to military exigencies and other causes he had to pass more than a month yet in fuming and fretting at the procrastination of the bombardment, and the deferring of his hopes was rendered all the more bitter by the daily accounts reaching him of the cruel and treacherous manner in which the French were prosecuting the war.*

Paris bombarded.

"If, in view of this state of things," he wrote, "we are forced to exercise the rights of war with a severity which we regret, and which appertains neither to the German national character nor to our traditions, as is proved by the wars of 1864 and 1866, the responsibility falls upon those who, without call or justification, have

* On the 14th December, and 9th January, he sent out Circular Despatches complaining of the way in which large numbers of captive French officers had broken their *parole* and fled from Germany, and of the inhuman manner in which the Geneva Convention had been violated by the French, whom he also charged with other flagrant breaches of the laws of civilised warfare.

forced upon the French the continuance of the Napoleonic war against Germany, and cast aside the traditions of European warfare."

It was to no purpose that those of the Diplomatic Body who had not yet left Paris—in spite of repeated warnings to do so—protested against the bombardment, as dangerous to themselves and those under their protection.* It was too late. The fact was, the Chancellor had reason to suspect that the French authorities had not permitted the subjects of neutral States to leave Paris, in the hope of inspiring the besiegers with a wholesome dread of complications with foreign Powers, and of thus cooling the aggressive ardour of the Germans. But Bismarck completely turned the tables on the authors of this subtle calculation. "Address your protests," he wrote, "to the rulers of that city." The more mouths Paris had to feed, he thought, the sooner was it likely to hoist the white flag. To the diplomatic gentlemen, therefore, he replied that, more from reasons of international courtesy than of international law, he was still willing to let *them* out of their prison; but, as for their numerous countrymen, he regretted not to see any other way of liberation for them than the surrender of Paris.

How the Chancellor defeated the calculations of the besieged.

"He that will not when he may,
When he will he shall have nay."

* Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador, was not one of those who remained in Paris after being warned that the city would be exposed to all the perils of a bombardment. His Lordship withdrew to Tours with a section of the Provisional Government, which England with several other Powers had already recognised as the *de facto* Government.

"We find ourselves," he concluded, "under the melancholy necessity of not being able to subordinate our military action to our sympathy with the sufferings of the civilian population of Paris."*

Paris makes a last desperate effort.

Growing from day to day, those sufferings had now become unendurable. Famine, anarchy, disease, despair, and death were swiftly doing their work on the proud, defiant city. Once more, however—it was the day after the startled watchers on the walls had faintly caught the thunder-roll of Emperor-acclaiming cheers that ascended from Versailles—once more, however, did the imprisoned Eagle rise and tear with beak and talons at the bars of its iron cage, in one last furious effort to be free; and then it sank back with lack-lustre eye, and bleeding, panting breast, ferociously resigned to its inevitable fate.† No more resources within, and no more hope of aid from without. Intervention had not been attempted, had not been thought of. Singular as it seemed to France, "Europe did *not* come to her rescue in gratitude for the heavenly 'illumination' it was getting from France; nor could all Europe, if it had, have prevented that awful Chancellor from having his own way."‡ Diplomacy with all its arts—and by no Power were these arts more persistently, or more pacifically plied than by England—had said its last word;§ and at last

* Correspondence between Bismarck and the Corps Diplomatique in Paris, 13th—17th January.

† The last unsuccessful sortie was made by the Paris garrison on the 19th January.

‡ Carlyle's letter to *The Times* on the Franco-German War.

§ The last mediatorial step taken by England (at the instigation of

the blinded French were brought to perceive that there was absolutely nothing left for them to do but to treat with their vanquishers on the terms of the latter. On the morning, therefore, of the 25th January, Bismarck was agreeably surprised by the arrival from the outposts of an hussar lieutenant, bringing with him a letter from M. Jules Favre; from M. Jules Favre, who, it may be remembered, "almost fainted" at the armistice conditions proposed to him by the Chancellor at Ferrières, and then left with a peroration on the heroic resolution of the inhabitants of Paris. Now, however, that their sublime heroism had succumbed to the gnawings of an empty stomach, M. Favre again begged for leave to come to Versailles, though it was no fault of his that he was not sitting in farcical conference with the representatives of the other Powers in London.

How Bismarck checkmated Favre.

Yes, in spite of the more immediate work that claimed his attention in Paris, M. Favre had actually made bold to express his determination to take part in the Black Sea Conference (which we have already disposed of). Here

M. de Chaudordy) will be best explained by quoting the following despatch from Lord Granville to Lord Lyons, dated 19th December:—"Count Bismarck, who has been made acquainted with the terms of your Excellency's telegram of the 16th instant, has replied that it is quite impossible to accede to any one of the three demands of the French Government as therein stated: namely, either an armistice with the condition of revictualing, in order to elect a Constituent Assembly; or the conclusion of peace without any cession of territory; or the assembly of an European Congress which should discuss the questions at issue between France and Prussia: and his Excellency added, moreover, that any German Government which should accede to such proposals, without being obliged to yield to force of arms, would find itself in the position of being compelled to abdicate."

was a fine opportunity, he thought, to exert his eloquence, not against Russian treaty-breakers, but in the cause of afflicted France; so (on the 13th January) he applied to Bismarck for a "safe-conduct to enable the Plenipotentiary of France to pass the Prussian lines."

"Oh, pardon me," returned the Chancellor, "but your Excellency is under a gross misapprehension in supposing that, on the mere proposal of the British Government, you can get all you want from us. Privately, we know well enough what your main object is in wishing to go to London: but apart from that, we cannot extend favours to you on the supposition that the Government of National Defence (which has not yet been sanctioned by the nation itself) is internationally in a position to negotiate in the name of the French people. . . . Allow me, therefore, to ask if it be advisable that your Excellency should leave Paris, and your post as a member of the Government, in order personally to take part in a Conference about the Black Sea, at a moment when interests are at stake in Paris so much more important to France and Germany than Article 11 of the Treaty of 1856. Your Excellency would also leave behind in Paris the diplomatic agents and the subjects of neutral States, who have remained, or rather have been detained there long after they had received permission to pass through the German lines, and who are therefore so much the more under the protection and care of your Excellency and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government *de facto*. I can therefore scarcely suppose that your Excellency, in the critical position of affairs, which you have so materially helped to bring about, will deprive yourself of the possibility of co-operating to effect a solution of the responsibility which rests upon you." *

* The above is the exact sense, and for the most part the *ipsissima verba* of Bismarck's reply to Favre's request for a safe-conduct.

France was only represented at the Black Sea Conference in its last sitting (13th March, by which time the Government of the National Defence had been sanctioned by the Assembly at Bordeaux) in the person of the Duc de Broglie, who had nothing to do but "give his assent to all the decisions of the Conference." And thus the screaming farce was brought to a climax.

M. Favre felt the force of this satirical remonstrance, and, indeed, he afterwards thanked Bismarck for reminding him so vividly of the duty he owed his country. "The language," he said, "of our inexorable conqueror agreed with that of my own conscience;" and so with frequent groans of anguish he journeyed to Versailles. "Dost thou know this?" asked Bismarck of his cousin on the evening—23rd—of Favre's arrival at headquarters, as with a gay air he whistled the hunter's call to be in at the death.—Death, indeed! The negotiations for an armistice lasted five days, in the course of which M. Favre—who was lodged by accident or design in apartments occupied by the chief of the Prussian police—frequently returned to Paris to confer with his colleagues; while numerous, on the other hand, were the visits paid by Bismarck to Moltke and the King.

In at the death.

We are sorry that we cannot do more than give the barest summary of the negotiations of which M. Favre himself has left us a most interesting and dramatic account.* Bismarck confessed that he liked his visitor much better this time than at Ferrières, but took it amiss that he would not partake more freely of the good things set before him, and complained of his utter ignorance of military matters. As beseemed the suppliant envoy of a starving city, Favre at first refused to touch champagne, but was gradually induced to let his glass be

Favre and his co-negotiator.

* "Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale," par M. Jules Favre de l'Académie Française (Paris, 1875).

filled, and to "eat like a man who had long fasted." As for M. Favre's military ignorance, that was to some extent remedied by his bringing with him a General Beaufort d'Hautepoule; but, though possessed of professional knowledge, the General shocked Bismarck by his utter lack of manners. Favre sipped his champagne like a simpering miss, while Beaufort drank and swore like a trooper. Bismarck declared that with his blustering and shouting, his oaths and his theatrical exclamations of "*Moi, Général de l'armée française!*" he was almost unbearable. Even Favre, "whose manners," said Bismarck, "are not first-rate," owned to being fairly ashamed of his loud, red-faced companion. Some one suggested that Beaufort had been purposely chosen in order to frustrate the negotiations; but Bismarck, on the contrary, thought he had been selected as it would make no difference to him whether or not he sank in public opinion for signing the capitulation. Such was the singular pair with whom the Chancellor had to treat. Favre was far from accusing Bismarck of that bad breeding which disfigured the character of Beaufort. On the contrary, he wrote:

"I should be disloyal to the truth were I not to admit that, in these painfuldiscussions, the Chancellor always endeavoured to soften the cruel hardness of his demands by the way in which he urged them. He took all the pains he could to moderate the military rigour of the General Staff, and on several points was so obliging as to make himself the champion for our claims."

It was with subtle intent to force the hand of his visitor and bring things to an immediate climax,

that the Chancellor received him with a "Too late! The Bonapartists are before you." This had the due effect on the mind of Favre, who, trembling with the alarm of the foolish virgins, asked whether the door of negotiation was really shut against the Republic.

"No, not exactly shut," replied Bismarck, "but we are resolved to make peace with the best contracting-party we can find;—the Emperor, the Prince Imperial with a Regency, or Prince Napoleon; and if you do not agree to our conditions, we have in Germany about 100,000 excellent French troops captured at Metz, who are still wholly devoted to the Imperial cause."

This hint was quite enough for M. Favre, who now clearly enough saw that, at any cost almost, it was his duty to conclude a truce for the election of a National Assembly, to take the place of the Legislative Body (of the Empire) which Bismarck threatened to restore. Of all the conditions of this truce, that which most excited the opposition of Favre was the proposed occupation of Paris by the German troops. On this point, indeed, he was inexorable, threatening to break off the negotiations rather than yield. The King and Moltke seemed to be equally stubborn; but here again Bismarck, pointing out the difference between substance and sentiment, induced them to give way on representing that the German troops would still have an opportunity of reaping the supreme reward of their valour and endurance; and at last, after much skilful fencing on both sides, the negotiators came to terms. It was agreed that there should be an armistice of twenty-one days for the purpose of allowing the con-

A truce concluded.

vocation of a freely elected National Assembly to pronounce on the question of peace or war, and that Paris should be revictualled; while the city, on the other hand, was to pay a war-contribution of 200,000,000 francs;* its garrison, with the exception of the National Guard, which was to retain its arms for the purpose of keeping order, was to be declared prisoners; its walls were to be disarmed, and all its ring of outer forts handed over to the Germans. Bismarck had declared to Favre that the Maires, the journalists, and the members of the Government in Paris would have to precede the Germans into these forts as a guarantee that they were not undermined; but this characteristic condition he did not press, on Favre describing it as a "humiliation," and offering himself as a hostage for the loyal execution of the agreement.

The Armistice Convention of Versailles was not

* At a parliamentary *matinée* (*Frühschoppen*) given by the Chancellor in the summer of 1884, he related the following anecdote in connection with the capitulation of Paris: "Of course I demanded as much as I knew beforehand would be refused me. I said to M. Thiers, 'A city so large and wealthy as Paris would feel insulted if I asked anything under a milliard.' On this M. Thiers made a very wry face, and prepared to take his leave. I accompanied him out of politeness, and the negotiation was continued on our way downstairs, and on the last step but one we agreed to the sum of 200 millions. Hereupon I went to the Emperor, and put it to him whether it would not be as well to assign these 200 millions to the South German States, which had to pay us war indemnities in 1866. The Emperor said, 'Prepare me, then, a resolution to this effect,' to which I replied that this I could not do: adding, that as soon as I took up my pen, as Chancellor, the matter was done, 'for your Majesty must do it yourself as Commander-in-Chief of the German army.' I remained alone in my opinion, and the matter went no further."

This was how the story was repeated in the newspapers at the time; but, of course, *Favre* must be substituted for *Thiers*. The mistake as to the name was probably not Bismarck's.

signed till the 28th (January), but on the evening of the 26th, Bismarck, in conducting Favre to the carriage which was to take him back to Paris, said:

The last shot.

"Now that we have gone so far, I do not think that a rupture of the negotiations is any longer possible, and if you are of the same mind, we shall cease firing to-night."

"I should have already asked you to do so," replied Favre with deep emotion, "but having the misfortune to represent vanquished Paris, I did not wish to beg a favour. Nevertheless, I accept your offer; it is the first consolation that comes to us in our misery."

"Very well then," rejoined the Chancellor, "it is agreed that both sides shall give the order to cease firing. See to it that your commands are strictly obeyed."

Favre promised to do so, but begged as a last favour that the city might have the honour of firing the last shot—of saying the last word in the quarrel. Back to Paris sped the well-nigh broken-hearted envoy of the Republic, his way lighted by the lurid flames which, bursting from Saint-Cloud, served as a funeral torch to the dead-struck Empire; and shortly before midnight he was standing on the balcony of the Foreign Office, with the snow-swollen Seine darkly and coldly shimmering beneath. "The artillery of our forts," he wrote, "and that of the German army were still hurling their terrific thunderbolts. Midnight struck. One more shot roared with far-reverberating echo that, growing weaker, at last died away, and then all around was still. It was the first silence we had experienced for weeks." * The war was over.

* "Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale."

The elections for a National Assembly took place on the 8th February, but there was very great danger of their not being held with that absolute freedom stipulated by the Armistice Convention. For, like a raging bull of Bashan, Gambetta had rushed at that agreement with intent to tear it to tatters and stamp it into the mud. With dictatorial fury he denounced the Convention as an act of cowardice and treason on the part of his Paris colleagues; with burning words of desperate patriotism he called upon his countrymen to take advantage of the truce to drill and organise themselves into a whirlwind army of defence, that would sweep the hated barbarians from the soil of invincible France; and he furthermore took upon himself to disqualify from sitting in the new Assembly a large class of persons who were the objects of his political hatred—all members of families which had ruled in France since 1789, as well as all those who had held high State functions under Napoleon the Little.

The French elections.

No one was less surprised at these dictatorial proceedings than Bismarck himself who, when treating with Favre for a truce, had asked what guarantee could be given him that their agreement would not come to naught under the "Gambetta reign of terror." He now, therefore, lost no time in telegraphing to Gambetta himself a protest against this high-handed conduct,* and at the same time

Bismarck and Gambetta.

* "On behalf of the freedom of the elections stipulated by the armistice, I protest against your regulations for depriving numerous categories of French citizens of the right of being elected to the Assembly.

appealed to the loyalty of M. Favre * to judge between the binding force of arbitrary decrees and that of solemn treaties. Nor did he appeal in vain. The members of the Government in Paris hastened to annul the ordinances of Gambetta, who at first made a show of resistance which threatened to add the horrors of civil war to the other miseries of the divided and afflicted nation. At last, however, he yielded and resigned. But all that belongs to the history of France; as well as how the elections were held on the 8th February; how the Assembly met at Bordeaux on the 12th, and was found to be mainly composed of Monarchists of various kinds and moderate Republicans; how it hastened to acclaim, as head of the executive power, the aged statesman M. Thiers, whose general popularity was evinced by the fact of his having been elected in no fewer than eighteen departments; and how, after a few stormy sittings, it deputed M. Thiers with two members (MM. Favre and Picard, Foreign and Home Affairs) of the Ministry of his own appointing, together with a committee of fifteen deputies, to proceed to Versailles and treat with Bismarck for the conclusion of peace.

Elections carried out under a system of arbitrary oppression, cannot confer the rights which the Armistice Convention recognises as possessed by freely elected deputies.—BISMARCK." Says Dr. Busch: "The Chief told us first that he had called Favre's attention also to the remarkable fact that he, who was decried as the despotic and tyrannical Count von Bismarck, had been obliged to protest, in the name of liberty, against the proclamation of Gambetta, the advocate of freedom, who wished to deprive many hundreds of his countrymen of eligibility, and all of freedom of election. He added that Favre had acknowledged this with a '*Oui, c'est bien drôle.*'"

* Despatch of 3rd February.

At Versailles the chief negotiators arrived on the 21st February, after having paid their respects to reconvalescent Paris. First the armistice was prolonged for a few days, and then M. Thiers was honoured by an interview both with the Emperor-King and the Crown Prince, having been warned beforehand by Bismarck to talk no politics with His Majesty. Thiers asked the Chancellor his conditions. The answer was brief and plain. All Alsace including Strasburg and Belfort, part of Lorraine with Metz, and an indemnity of six milliards of francs (£240,000,000 !).

M. Thiers negotiates peace with the Chancellor.

These were terribly hard conditions, but they were not nearly so hard as they might have been ; they were certainly not so hard as the French would have exacted, had they been victorious ; they were no more than barely sufficed to compensate Germany for the enormous sacrifices she had made, and to insure her against future aggression from the same quarter. Two hundred and forty millions of pounds sterling is a sum which seems to appeal more to the imagination than to the reason, but it is a sum which is not much more than a third of the National Debt of England in 1870 ; and Bismarck had provided the French negotiators with two eminent financiers—Herr von Bleichröder, a Jewish banker of Berlin, and Count Henckel, a Silesian magnate ("Black Schröder and Le Comte Henkel," as Favre calls them) —to prove to them that not only was France capable of paying it, but also that it would barely compensate Germany for her enormous sacrifices of life and limb, of

money and material.* As for the annexation of territory, this, argued Bismarck, was the right of every conqueror; and in the present case the right of conquest was strengthened by the title of ancient and unjustly interrupted possession. There is, however, reason to believe that, from motives of policy, from unwillingness to leave germinating in the French heart the seeds of a too luxuriant revengefulness, Bismarck was not quite so eager for the retention of Metz as the military party; † but to this party he had to yield, and present to M. Thiers a cold, inexorable front.

"He pleases me very much," observed the Chancellor of M. Thiers, "for he has a fine intellect, good manners, and can tell his story very well. I often feel for him, for he is in a very bad position; but all that cannot help him." No, nothing could do that, not even his threat of the likely intervention of Europe, if Germany did not abate her demands. "If you speak to me of Europe," said the Chancellor, "I will speak to

Reaping the whirlwind.

* "Il (Bismarck) lui répéta plusieurs fois que ce que lui paraissait exaggéré était jugé insuffisant en Allemagne. Les hommes les plus graves de ce pays portaient notre rançon à douze et même à quinze milliards, et prétendaient prouver par des calculs rigoreux que cette somme n'atteignait pas l'importance du préjudice souffert."—*M. Favre.*

† At dinner one day, during the peace negotiations, Bismarck said: "If they gave a milliard more, we might perhaps let them have Metz. We would then take eight hundred million francs, and build ourselves a fortress a few miles further back, somewhere about Falkenberg, or towards Saarbrücken—there must be some suitable spot thereabouts. We should thus make a clear profit of two hundred millions. I do not like so many Frenchmen being in our house against their will. It is just the same with Belfort. It is all French there too. The military men, however, will not let Metz slip, and perhaps they are right."

you of Napoleon and of the 100,000 bayonets which, at a wink from us, would re-seat him on his throne." "That must have made an impression on Thiers, for the next time he felt inclined to talk of Europe he suddenly checked himself and said, 'I beg your pardon.'"*

These were five days of fearful agony of mind, and dreadful wrestling with the Giant Compensation on the part of Lilliputian M. Thiers. A singular dispensation of fate had appointed him to do battle with this invulnerable, this invincible Giant; appointed him, as it were, to suffer in his old age for the sins of his youth, and to bear himself the full weight of the burden with which he had heedlessly saddled his nation. For though it is true that, from motives of expediency, he protested against the war; is it not equally true that, in his various history-books, he, more than any other, had preached Napoleon-worship and the doctrine of French supremacy on the Continent, as well as other doctrines which, taking root in the hearts of his countrymen, made them the sworn foes of Prussia and of German unity? He had himself sown the wind, and he was now reaping the whirlwind. Having allied himself with the Demon of "*Divide et impera*," he was now struggling in the merciless grasp of the Giant of Compensating Conquest.

Nobly, skilfully, eloquently, imploringly did he plead for mercy and moderation. Six milliards! Arming himself with the authority of Rothschild, M. Thiers

* Dr. Busch.

represented that this was a sum France could never possibly pay, and that it would be dishonest on her part to enter into an engagement which she knew it would be absolutely beyond her power to fulfil. There was much passionate discussion of the question, but, before the English Government had time to carry out its intention of interceding with him in favour of a diminution of the money-fine, Bismarck received the French negotiators one morning with the news that the Emperor-King had been pleased to reduce the sum from six to five milliards. Still, this did not yet content M. Thiers, who pleaded that two milliards were all that France could give, and as much as Germany wanted. This higgle-haggling was more than Bismarck could bear, and he lost his temper. "I see very well," he angrily exclaimed, "that you are only aiming at recommencing the war; and in doing so you will enjoy the advice and support of your good friends the English." He strode up and down the room, rebuked the negotiators for recurring to matters which had been already settled, and excitedly declared that his conditions were ultimatums. "*Ah, c'est une spoliation véritable, c'est une vileté,*" exclaimed M. Thiers, springing up in anger; but his wrath was cooled by Bismarck calmly declaring that he had not French enough to understand or answer such a charge, and that, if his interlocutor wished to continue the negotiations, he must do so in German.*

"C'est une spoliation véritable!"

* Dr. Busch gives another, though substantially similar, account of this incident: "When I demanded that of him," said the Chancellor,

Fruitless as the desperate endeavours of M. Thiers to wring from the Chancellor a further reduction of the money-fine, were his frantic efforts to save Metz. On these two points the latter was as inexorable as Rhadamanthus; nor would he listen to the eloquent and patriotic appeal of M. Thiers on behalf of Belfort, a city which was purely French, and had never, like Metz and Strasburg, belonged to Germany.

A dramatic interview.

"Very well then," exclaimed M. Thiers, with the courage of despair. "Very well then, M. le Comte, as you will. Our negotiations are a mere pretence. What you really wish is to make us pass under your yoke. We demand a purely French city, and you refuse it; that is to say, you are resolved to wage against us a war of extermination. Do so. Rob us of our provinces, burn down our homes, strangle our peaceful inhabitants; in one word, complete your work. We shall fight you as long as our breath remains. Perhaps we shall die, but we shall never be dishonoured." *

Bismarck seemed touched by these eloquent and earnest words. He replied that he felt for the suffering of M. Thiers, and would be only too glad if he could make him any concession; but all he had to do was to obey the orders of the Emperor-King. Meanwhile he

"though he is usually well able to control himself, he rose to his full height, and said, '*Mais c'est une indignité!*' I would not allow myself to make a blunder, but I spoke to him in German after this. He listened for a time, and probably did not know what to make of it. Then he began in a querulous tone, 'But, M. le Comte, you are aware that I know no German.' I replied to him—this time in French, 'When you spoke just now of 'indignity,' I found that I did not understand French sufficiently, so I proceeded to speak German, where I know both what I say and what I hear.' He at once caught my meaning, and as a concession wrote out what I had proposed, and what he had formerly considered an indignity."

* "Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale."

went out, and was again closeted both with Moltke and His Majesty.

"I do not believe," writes M. Favre, from whom we quote this account of the incident, "that any criminal ever waited for judgment with more feverish anxiety. Motionless and mute, we followed with bewildered gaze the advancing hand of the clock. The door opened, and Bismarck, standing on the threshold, announced that he would not insist on the entry of the German troops into Paris, provided we gave him Belfort.

"There was a minute of inexpressible agony; but we were agreed without having consulted. An exchange of glances sufficed; and M. Thiers translated their meaning into patriotic words.

"'Nothing,' he said, 'will equal the grief of Paris when it opens the gates of its undesecrated walls to the foe which could not force them. And therefore we have conjured, as we still conjure you, to spare the city this unmerited humiliation. Nevertheless, it is ready to drain the cup (of its bitterness) to the dregs in order to preserve to the nation a spot of ground and a heroic city. We thank you, M. le Comte, for this opportunity of ennobling our sacrifices. The sorrow of Paris will be the ransom of Belfort, which we now claim more persistently than ever.'

"'Think well over it,' said the Count; 'perhaps you will rue the rejection of our proposal.'

"'We should be wanting in our duty if we accepted it,' replied M. Thiers.

"The door again closed, and the two Prussian statesmen (Bismarck and Moltke) resumed their consultation.

"It seemed to us to last a century. Moltke left, but the King had still to be seen, and, in spite of our impatience, Bismarck waited until he rose from table. At half-past six he went to His Majesty, and at eight M. Thiers had reaped the reward of his heroic exertions. He had saved Belfort."

He had saved Belfort; he had succeeded in reducing the indemnity by a milliard; but, in all other respects, he had to yield with a broken heart to an overpowering

fate. On Sunday, the 26th February, the Preliminaries of Peace were signed in the Chancellor's quarters at Versailles; and when M. Thiers, in profound yet well-concealed emotion, had affixed his signature to the instrument, Bismarck took him by the hand. "You are the last," he said, "who ought to have been burdened by France with this sorrow, for of all Frenchmen you have least deserved it"*—an allusion, no doubt, to his protest against the war. Bismarck himself, radiant with joy, signed the Treaty with a costly golden pen which had been sent to him for the purpose several weeks previously by some admirers in Germany, and which he now called for, says M. Favre, with "theatrical pomp."† "I may promise you," he had replied in acknowledging the gift, "that in my hands, so help me, God, it will sign nothing

The Preliminaries of Peace.

* Compare with this p. 632, *ante*.

† "All things," writes M. Favre, "having been arranged by Saturday evening, the 25th, next day at half-past twelve was appointed for the signature. But we had not taken into account the intolerable slowness of the Prussian Chancellery. We had to wait more than three hours, which had to be filled up with a general conversation that seemed a refinement of punishment. At last all being completed and compared, M. de Bismarck said to us: 'It will now be well, I think, to call in my colleagues of Bavaria, Würtemberg, and Baden.' We had no reason to object to the presence of these three statesmen, who were scarcely more free than ourselves. The tone with which the Chancellor received them was not calculated to induce them to forget the modesty of their *rôle*. They were called in to hear the Treaty read and to sign it; and they did so without presuming to make any observation. The countenance of M. de Bismarck was radiant. With theatrical pomp he sent for a golden pen presented to him for the occasion by the ladies of a German town (Pforzheim). Silent and overcome, M. Thiers approached the little card-table on which lay the documents; he wrote his name without betraying the feelings that tortured him. I tried to imitate him, and we withdrew. The sacrifice was accomplished."—"*Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale.*"

unworthy of German sentiments and the German sword." That he had kept his word, was proved by the following heads of the Preliminary Treaty of Peace :—

"1. France renounces in favour of the German Empire the following rights : the fifth part of Lorraine, including Metz and Thionville, and Alsace less Belfort.

"2. France will pay the sum of five milliards of francs, of which one milliard is to be paid in 1871, and the remaining four milliards by instalments extending over three years.

"3. The German troops will begin to evacuate the French territory as soon as the Treaty is ratified. They will then evacuate the interior of Paris and some departments lying in the western region. The evacuation of the other departments will take place gradually after payment of the first milliard, and proportionately to the payment of the other four milliards.

"Interest at the rate of five per cent. per annum will be paid on the amount remaining due from the date of the ratification of the Treaty.

"4. The German troops will not levy any requisitions in the departments occupied by them, but will be maintained at the cost of France.

"5. A delay will be granted to the inhabitants of the territories annexed to choose between the two nationalities.

"6. Prisoners of war will be immediately set at liberty.

"7. Negotiations for a definitive Treaty of Peace will be opened at Brussels after the ratification of this Treaty.

"8. The administration of the departments occupied by the German troops will be entrusted to French officials, but under the control of the chiefs of the German Corps of occupation.

"9. The present Treaty confers upon the Germans no rights whatever in the portion of territories not occupied.

"10. This Treaty will have to be ratified by the National Assembly of France."

On the third day (1st March) after the signature of this agreement, an army of 30,000 German troops made

a triumphal entry into Paris, after being reviewed by the Emperor on the plain of Longchamps.* This was the crowning glory of the war, and it was shared by Bismarck, who rode in as far as the Arc de Triomphe with the victorious troops.† It was exactly seven months since the war began, and now the legions of the Fatherland were chanting the "*Wacht am Rhein*" on the banks of the Seine!

Triumphal entry into Paris and return to Berlin.

The Germans remained in Paris till the morning of the 3rd, by which time the Peace Preliminaries had been approved by the Assembly at Bordeaux and ratified at Versailles; and within a week of this time Bismarck was back in Berlin, leaving France to recover from her frightful wounds as best she might, and looking forward himself to the gigantic task of consolidating the Empire which he had now created. His homeward way, which resembled a triumphal progress, lay through Frankfort, where he had commenced his diplomatic career. Within a bow-shot of the Thurn-and-Taxis Palace, in which the squabbling old Diet sat, and in which Bismarck brooded over his schemes of German unity, stands the Swan Hôtel, where a little later—on the 10th

* Describing the review, the *Times* Correspondent wrote: "Count Bismarck, who had put on his helmet of steel with brass mountings, and wore his cuirassier boots, but not his cuirass, was in the crowd of officers a hundred yards away or more, and did not approach His Majesty during the march past."

† It is related that, on approaching the Arc de Triomphe, Bismarck was assailed with words of abuse by a forbidding-looking fellow in a blouse, and that he silenced him by riding up and asking him good-naturedly for a light to his cigar.

May—was signed the final Treaty of Peace between France and Germany; and as Bismarck passed through the ancient and familiar city, we can well imagine him comparing past with present, and murmuring with a smile of ineffable pride:

"*Tantae molis erat Germanam condere gentem.*"

END OF VOL. I.

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